

The State Hermitage Museum

LOST EMPIRE OF THE SILK ROAD

Buddhist Art from Khara Khoto
(X-XIIIth century)



Thyssen-Bornemisza
Foundation

Electa

Lost Empire of the Silk Road
Buddhist Art from Khara Khoto
(X-XIIIth century)

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On cover
Double-Headed Buddha
Early 13th century
The State Hermitage Museum,
St. Petersburg
(Cat. No. 1, detail)
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The consolidation of a powerful Tibetan Empire in the seventh century heralded a period of intense cultural and religious assimilation. A dynamic and self-confident nation absorbed Buddhism, largely from India, in its religious, artistic and literary entirety. Meanwhile, mutually respectful relations were established between Tibet and China.

Although centralized power declined the creative momentum continued. Consequently, when the Tanguts strove to establish their own independent state to the North-East, cultural and religious developments in Tibet were among the powerful influences for their growth. This can be clearly seen in this collection from Khara Khoto.

The brilliance and vitality of the paintings in particular display a vivid celebration of freedom. Elements of Tibetan, Chinese or Central Asian styles seem to have been freely employed. There is no sense that one style or the other was adopted under duress, or that one cultural force was more politically dominant than the others. Similarly, the Vajrayāna Buddhist tradition prevailing in Tibet and the Amitābha and Kuan-yin devotional schools from China seem to have found equal favour. These paintings are the work of a cultivated person whose confident self-assurance encouraged creative interaction. Such a synthesis is more typical of the Tibetan approach than the Chinese.

These beautiful works recall a period of Central Asian history when many independent states emerged and lived in peaceful interaction with one another. Many are forgotten because they no longer exist. Even those who survived have suffered greatly in this century when the map of the whole of Asia was redrawn in the aftermath of World War II. Ironically, it was Russia and Britain's vying for influence over Tibet that stimulated interest in the region. This led indirectly to the discovery of the Khara Khoto stūpa and the preservation of the collection in St. Petersburg.

Finally, the exhibition gives grounds for optimism. The same wave of freedom that has resulted in these works being released on loan from the Hermitage Museum has also brought liberty to many of the constrained peoples of Central Asia. I hope that by increasing awareness of the region and its magnificent heritage, this exhibition will contribute to the restoration of the right of all the peoples of Central Asia to live in peace and freedom. I appreciate the effort of everyone in making the exhibition possible, particularly Francesca von Habsburg, without whose enthusiastic dedication it would not have taken place.

His Holiness Tenzin Gyatso, the XIVth Dalai Lama
April 23, 1993

Foreword

As the Director of the State Hermitage Museum, I take great pleasure in the fact that those who have never visited St. Petersburg now have the opportunity to see one of its greatest treasures; a collection from which such a broad range of items have never previously been exhibited outside the Hermitage itself.

The exhibition contains masterpieces of Buddhist art which are both intellectually exciting and aesthetically delightful. They have their origin in a truly remarkable medieval civilisation, that of the Tangut state of Xi Xia. Destroyed by its enemies, it lapsed into almost total oblivion. Yet the heroic efforts of several generations of scholars have now restored this lost culture to the common human heritage.

This exhibition, therefore, should also serve to remind us how much we owe to scholarship, and how relatively little we still know about our past.

The exhibits you will see have an amazing and romantic history. They were sealed in a suburgan. The horde came and went, and for centuries they lay buried beneath the abandoned ruins of the Black Town of Khara Khoto. Then Pyotr Kozlov, one of the last and finest of the now extinct breed – the great travellers-explorers – discovered and excavated the town.

Crates of finds arrived in St. Petersburg, and the painstaking work of scholars began.

We take pride in the fact that it was scholars of St. Petersburg to whom it fell to protect these treasures and give them new life, exploring and revealing their enormous cultural and historical value. In giving back to the world the culture of the Tangut, Russian scholarship has discharged its debt to the remarkable ancient artefacts which fate put in its hands.

It is, then, our pleasure to offer for display a considerable part of this legacy, lovingly preserved, restored and studied within the walls of two of St. Petersburg's ancient centres of learning, the State Hermitage Museum and the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences.

I hope that the exhibition and the accompanying catalogue, containing the results of the work of generations of scholars, will give real delight not just to specialists, but to all those who appreciate the beautiful and the wise.

Welcome to the world of our museum and our scholarship!

Mikhail Piotrovsky
Director of the State Hermitage Museum

Foreword

I became acquainted with the huge resources of Buddhist art in the former Soviet Union quite coincidentally, when I was accompanying my younger brother Alexander on a trip to a place of his choice in early 1990: St. Petersburg. Whilst visiting the Hermitage we discovered that a few paces from the much visited French Impressionist galleries, the Oriental department, had a most impressive collection of Buddhist art, meticulously inventoried, wonderfully documented, and carefully studied since the turn of the century. After admiring their magnificent collection of over 2,000 bronzes and hundreds of tangkas, I began to be intrigued as to the origins of these works. The then curator of the Tibetan department, Dr. Gennady Leonov, introduced me to perspectives particular to the former Soviet Union.

'Glasnost', a word rarely mentioned in Russia anymore, was on everyone's lips at that time. This described a mood of a new openness and a tentative resurfacing of the past. The Hermitage holds the legacy of the Czars, and it is the Oriental department that bears witness to their interests in Central Asia. The expeditions into Central Asia led by Colonel P.K. Kozlov during the first quarter of this century unexpectedly exposed a missing chapter in the history of Asian art, which had disappeared without a trace centuries ago: the lost Tangut Empire, which lay north of the ancient Silk Road that once connected Europe to China. These routes were channels not only for the trade traffic, but also for communication of ideas, beliefs and artistic traditions. The Tangut State, which declared itself Empire during its short 250 years of existence, was subsequently lost in 1227 to Genghis Khan, who envied its strategic position controlling a large area of the Silk Road. Following the defeat, and after a brief survival under Mongol reign, Khara Khoto on the northern border of the Tangut Empire finally succumbed to the Gobi desert sands after the Edzin-Gol, the river which fed its wells, dried up. This catalogue will take you deep into the lost Empire of the Tanguts revealing its customs and traditions through the enormously varied and rich cultural heritage contained in this collection discovered in Khara Khoto. It also reflects the huge influence of both Tibet and China, as these two artistic traditions are predominant. However, if one looks a little closer, one will notice that on a few of the paintings the styles and techniques actually overlap. What emerges is a nation struggling to establish its own representative Buddhist

tradition. The Tanguts were very aware of their unique position. They described it elegantly themselves as "Between Tibet and China." It symbolised the cultural self confidence of the different ethnic groups within the Tangut Empire, and their mutual respect for each other. One can only hope that the balance could someday be found again.

Kozlov had shown a remarkable interest in Buddhism during his earlier expeditions. He wrote an article in Russkaya Starina which declared that on May 5th, 1905 the Imperial will had been proclaimed to send Captain Kozlov to Urga for four months. I was compelled to compare his description of the Dalai Lama in this article to my own experience upon first meeting the present Dalai Lama. In both occasions, the Dalai Lama was in forced exile. Kozlov wrote: "My first meeting with the Dalai Lama took place on July 1st 1905 at 3 pm... I went to the palace in a small cart and found myself at the Dalai Lama's house, and in a minute I was in front of the Dalai Lama himself. He was sitting solemnly on the throne. His face was thoughtful and calm. As for me, I was greatly excited at standing face to face with the ruler of Tibet. I could not believe that my long-standing dream was fulfilled at last. But it was fulfilled partly, because I have always dreamt first to see Lhasa, the mysterious capital of Tibet, and then to see its Supreme Ruler... I fixed my eyes on the face of the Great Reincarnation. I watched his gestures and then I came to him and put a light silk khadak upon his hands and received back from him his khadak made of blue silk, very long and luxurious. Bowing low and respectfully to the head of the Buddhist Church, I greeted him on behalf of the Russian Imperial Geographical Society... this day was one of the happiest among those I have spent in Asia."

His account of his meetings with the Dalai Lama are extremely observant, and his style of writing tremendously descriptive, rich with anecdotes of all kinds. Kozlov was genuinely in love with Central Asia. The extremely dedicated progress he made, and this historical discovery certainly assure him an important role in the Russian history books. His extensive travels to Tibet reveal a man who most certainly expected to leave his life out there.

What made Kozlov so attractive to me was not only his distinguished moustache, but his fallibility, thus accentuating his very human qualities. In 1923-26, Kozlov returned to recover the remaining part of the treasure that he was unable

to carry back to St. Petersburg after his 1909 expedition – the huge clay figures from the stūpa, which in the 1909 expedition had been buried for safe keeping. But drifting sand had so changed the landscape in the intervening years, that they were unable to trace the spot where the statues had been re-buried. Kozlov arrived in Ulanbaator (previously known as Urga) in 1923 with a Buick motorcar, piled high with luggage like a camel, and tried to reach Khara Khoto again. He managed to get permission to cross the new border, slipping and sliding across the trackless desert, with its monotonous hillocks and plain, and finally reached the spot which it seemed he remembered so well, but there was nothing to be found. Everything was covered, buried in sand. “This time Khara Khoto didn’t reveal itself to Pyotr Kuzmich, no matter how we motored back and forth,” wrote his chauffeur A.A. Turutanov. Back in Leningrad, as it was still called in 1990, I discovered another quite particular perspective. One day in April 1990 I was led to the Kazan Cathedral, the Museum of Religion and Atheism, recently renamed: the Museum of the History of Religion. The shock was to stay with me until today and has helped me to begin to understand the oppression and terror which had reigned for the last seventy years. There I found atheism, proudly exhibited, presented with an earth-shattering vulgarity which left me shaken and nauseous. Sacred objects exposed in a way that successfully robbed them of any significance, erasing any trace of their inspirational aspects, making a mockery of the divine qualities they might have once had. Blasphemous guides still abused the saintly atmosphere of the cathedral, screeching their rehearsed profane lectures, heaping further ridicule on any trace of spirituality which still survived. This bore witness to the tragic and systematic destruction of all religions and their respective cultures – two hundred monasteries and temples of Buddhist faith were destroyed during the Bolshevik and Stalinist revolutions. This is changing, and enormous efforts are being made towards a cultural and spiritual renaissance. This exhibition is the living example of these changes. I included this short descriptive personal account as a caution – whilst we marvel over the artistic legacy of the lost Tanguts: this unique representation of their entire existence, we must keep in mind that cultural genocide is still happening every day, in many parts of the world – in Tibet, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, in Cambodia, to mention only a few, at an

enormous expense of human lives and cultural patrimony. My most sincere wish is that we all be reminded that the evils of the past, are still the evils of today, and will continue into the future if we do not commit ourselves to contain and destroy them.

I would like to dedicate this exhibition to His Holiness the XIVth Dalai Lama, in sincere gratitude for his immense patience and generosity towards me, and the inspiration his support gave me to discover that the central task of culture is to reinforce inner directed persons who feel a culturally driven impulse to participate in society, to contribute to its creativity and to refrain from negative impulses that tear the social fabric. His Holiness the Dalai Lama refused to accept my resignation back in 1991, when the challenge of such an ambitious project truly overwhelmed me. The confidence His Holiness put into my abilities was pivotal in inspiring me to develop not only a unique project, but to participate in furthering the understanding of cultural identity as an intrinsic part of every nation’s right to individual expression and independence. I am indebted to family, friends and colleagues, who have lifted the veil of ignorance which hindered my every effort, and whose faith and generous support gave me an inestimable thrust toward the fulfillment of this collaborative work, enabling me to transform a commitment into reality. Most particularly to my father Baron Hans Heinrich Thyssen-Bornemisza, who allowed this project to develop under his wing and gave me an opportunity not only to bring this exceptional collection into the curriculum of the Villa Favorita, but also supported my efforts as an Exhibition Coordinator and gave me an unequalled opportunity to develop professional qualifications for which I am, and will remain, eternally grateful. He kept a tough line all along, expecting a high level of responsibility and quality in a personal gesture of ensuring the continuity of the Thyssen-Bornemisza Foundation’s reputation of excellence. To my husband Karl von Habsburg-Lothringen, whose patience is more than a virtue. I would certainly never have been able to fully participate in the completion of this project without his unconditional love and respectful support.

Francesca von Habsburg
Exhibition Coordinator

Acknowledgments

As Coordinator of this exhibition, and member of the council of the Thyssen-Bornemisza Foundation, I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks for the support received from those who contributed in constructive ways to the final fruition of this exhibition and catalogue. I must mention a few very special people to whom I am particularly grateful. It has been a special privilege to work with Dr. Mikhail Piotrovsky: the new director of the State Hermitage Museum. This project took a completely fresh and inspired turn, brought about by his personal interest and active participation. The relationship between our respective museums goes back a decade, and it has been a genuine and creative collaboration which I hope to continue and expand. In this context, it is with great admiration and fondness, that I and my colleagues at the Thyssen-Bornemisza Foundation remember the previous director of the Hermitage and great orientalist, the late Dr. Boris Piotrovsky.

Special thanks go to Irene Martin, Director of the Thyssen-Bornemisza Foundation, whose dedication in seeing this project through in every detail, and whose personal resolve to re-establish the bond between the Thyssen-Bornemisza Foundation and the State Hermitage Museum, have nurtured an extremely positive and respectful climate that I feel is paramount in developing meaningful relationships between museums in the West and our colleagues in the former Soviet Union. Projects such as these will hopefully encourage other western institutions to take the problems confronting our colleagues in former eastern bloc countries to heart, and to seize every opportunity available to assist them reconstruct the glorious institutions they represent. Dr. Vladimir Matveyev, the new Deputy Director, whose overwhelmingly difficult task it has been to bring about revolutionary changes and improvements to the State Hermitage Museum. Our thanks go to him especially for his unfailing assistance and efficient professionalism in the realization of this project. Dr. Kira Samosyuk, whose unchallengeable authority on the Khara Khoto collection was stretched to the limits. Her openness and generosity in kind and in spirit have contributed to make this exhibition possible at all. To Dr. Maria Rudova for her knowledge of the Chinese section of the exhibition.

Heartfelt appreciation must go to: Dr. Yuri Petrosyan, Director of the Institute of Oriental Studies. His willingness to open his doors to this project and make all his staff available to work

with during the long preparatory phase of the exhibition has initiated a new dynamic relationship. The extraordinary resources the Institute has are incalculable in the realm of Oriental and Asiatic studies, and it is with great enthusiasm that I welcome this initiative to make previously unknown material available. He took responsibility for bringing about great changes which made the loan of some of the most precious items in his collection possible. To Dr. Evgeny Kychanov for his scholarly texts and key advice on selection of items from the collection, together with Dr. Lev Savitsky, who described the Tibetan manuscripts in the catalogue, and Dr. Margaret Vorobyova-Desyatovskaya for her valuable advice. The Russian Geographical Society provided us with original documents and glass negatives which illustrate in a sensational way the 1909 discovery of Khara Khoto. I would like to thank its learned Secretary Alexander O. Brincken who made our unusual request possible, along with his colleague Dr. Tamara Matvejeva. We are also grateful for the generous support we received from Dr. Svetlana Kalyadina, Director of the Kozlov Museum, housed in his old flat in St. Petersburg. They provided us with photographs necessary to illustrate Kozlov's travels and life, and an endless source of personal information about the explorer. I must also mention my elegant translator, who proved to be extraordinarily reliable throughout even the most treacherous times: Nicholai Gorchkov.

Heartfelt appreciation goes to: Kalon Kalsang Yeshe, who, with trusting patience and inspired guidance kept me on the right tracks, and who, on several occasions, lent me the calm and confidence needed to tackle the most frustrating obstacles I encountered along the way. His wife Kim Yeshe, whose down-to-earth, practical and pragmatic approach helped me come to terms with the task ahead, and whose endless reserve of energy and dedication is an example to us all. Also to Karma Gelek, Secretary of the Council for Religious and Cultural Affairs of His Holiness the Dalai Lama for his kind participation. On the Thyssen-Bornemisza team I would like to mention the superb work performed by Elisabeth Storm Nagy whose editorial talents have risen to new heights on this occasion. Her unfailing dedication to the Khara Khoto project merits infinitely more praise than it is possible to mention here. Suffice it to say: "Bless you Elisabeth." To Stephen Batchelor whose brilliant contribution to this catalogue conveys the gentle spirituality of Buddhism and makes the themes and

images of this ancient world religion accessible and enjoyable to all. Marina Djabbarzade, for her endless precision and perseverance in collecting the massive amount of related material necessary to research and understand the Khara Khoto collection. Like all of us, she dove into this project with fearless enthusiasm and great professionalism. To Robert Bruce-Gardner for the over-generous support and advice we received from him on crucial conservation issues. This unique and extremely fragile collection deserved the gifted talents of this truly remarkable man, whose spirit and humor lightened up even the grimmest day, and whose friendship I value and honour tremendously. To Raman Schlemmer, whose aesthetic eye for presenting oriental art to a western audience has won him acclaim on several occasions in the past, and this is no exception. He has contributed a unique touch of elegance to the exhibition with his talented design of the installation. His calm and soothing manner brought solace in some of the more unnerving moments during the development stages of the exhibition.

At the same time I would like to thank André Frey and Tableaurama for their concerted efforts to give us the very best quality of frames, which beautifully enhances the Khara Khoto collection.

Kind thanks to: Dyab Rimpoche, His Holiness the Dalai Lama's representative on the committee formed to oversee this project, for his support in reading the final text and his most constructive comments and assistance. Tashi Thingo Rimpoche whose exacting professional approach in dealing with the specific Buddhist and Sanskrit terminology was most helpful and always delivered with clarity and kindness. To him I owe generous gratitude and respect. Dr. Heather Stoddard gave unequalled scholarly support to the enormous and obstacle-ridden research phase of this project. Dr. Gennady Leonov for his patience in bringing me to terms with the wealth and quality of Buddhist collections in the former Soviet Union, and all the constructive advice he made so available to us. I would like to offer special thanks to Andrej Terentiev whose resolve and personal perseverance contributed enormously in seeing this project develop. A true Buddhist, humble and kind, he was wonderfully resourceful, and a mercurial messenger. I would also like to thank his wife for her generous hospitality, and excellent cooking, which livened up the usual Russian diet, and provided us with a warm and welcoming home away from home on several occasions.

To Mr. and Mrs. Silvano Todaro and the staff of Sytco for their over-generous assistance in logistical matters within the former Soviet Union, without which we would have lost much time, patience and energy. To John Callanan for his supreme talent in grasping the overall picture so accurately, and providing us with the wonderful maps for the catalogue which brilliantly illustrate the different historical periods and cross-cultural influences so necessary in understanding the origins of this collection. To Anthony Aris for his assistance in finding the people best suited for this collaborative work and for being a major support during some real treacherous journeys. Particularly for finding the steam baths in Ulan Ude, where there was no hot water for a week. His obstinance in achieving excellence and his bearish drive toward positive results is quite inspiring. Sergei Klovov for having introduced me to him, and to the idea of an exhibition from Soviet collections back in 1990. John Taylor and Diane Dubler have provided inspiration and encouragement, key advice, not to mention valuable source material from the beginning, for which I am most grateful. Also thanks to Tom Brooks for dedicated assistance he gave the project during its formative stages, and all the work he did in inventory. To Floriana Vismara for immersing herself so thoroughly in the subject-matter and contributing in a most valuable manner to the Italian translation, and her baby son Federico, for allowing her to spend so much time on this elaborate work. Graziella Ombroni, who broke in her skills as the new Registrar of the Foundation with excellent results. Adriano Pierobon for his preparation of the installation, and all my other collaborators at the Thyssen-Bornemisza Foundation: Emil Bosshard, Veronica Bosshard, Lucia Cassol, Anne G. Manning, Patrizia Coray, Salvatore Migliardo, Marcello Mazzoleni and Harriet Rubin for their professional excellence throughout this difficult undertaking. Christina Schachenmann and Marc Lupien of the ARCH Foundation provided valuable support work with logistics and some good laughs. The immensely difficult task of translating this complicated catalogue text from Russian was carried out with an exacting degree of precision by Michael Shotton, Ursula Stevens and Marina De Filippo, with valuable assistance in the correction of Chinese, Sanskrit and Tibetan terminology by Prof. Otto Ladstätter, Dr. Giotto Canevascini and Ulrich Von Schröder. Many thanks to Julia Moore for her generous and enthusiastic support in sharing with us her professional

experience. To Dr. Nick Ribush for his kind and helpful response.

I wish to express my gratitude to Massimo Vitta Zelman, President of Electa, for his loyal commitment to working with us on this project, and concerted effort toward nurturing a long term constructive relationship between our two organizations. Franco Ambrosio pronounced doomsday deadlines, but oversaw the production of this catalogue with cooperative flexibility, together with Marcello Francone, Alessandro Bonfanti, Alberto Rossetti and their staff members, Stefania Di Gioia, Adriano Lembi, Pierluigi Micalizzi, Dario Tagliabue, Angelo Mombelli and Franco Peruzzi. A special note of gratitude I would like to make to James Bradburne for his intelligent insight into this exhibition, together with his innovative and inspired talents which gave rise to a new style in the presentation of stimulating didactical material. These

talents found a brilliant expression in his catalogue for children which has added a brand-new dimension to our museum's approach. He has been instrumental in infusing a fresh new style into our exhibition programs. Special thanks to Francesco Boglione from Willis Corroon Group, insurers of the Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection, for the generous contribution towards this project. Mr. Bruno Monguzzi for immediate, friendly and constructive advice. The City of Lugano made our local poster campaign and boat service possible – a cooperative gesture which is very appreciated. Last but not least, a warm thanks to Crédit Suisse, for providing valuable support in more than financial terms towards the realization of this exhibition.

Francesca von Habsburg
Exhibition Coordinator

This exhibition introduces a unique collection of art treasures: the discoveries made during an expedition in 1907-1909 by the intrepid Russian traveller and explorer of Central Asia, Pyotr Kuzmich Kozlov. All the art works, manuscripts and other artefacts brought back from Khara Khoto, the Black Town, are kept in two repositories in St. Petersburg, no more than a stone's throw apart: 3500 in the Hermitage, and 8000 in the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

The first exhibition of the Khara Khoto treasures was held in 1910, immediately after Kozlov's return from his expedition, in the newly constructed buildings of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society. The explorer's fame and the sensational nature of his discovery brought the St. Petersburg public flocking to gaze at packing cases full of still unsorted items, piles of books and scrolls, paintings and sculptures still dusted with desert sand.

Only such specialist orientalists as S. F. Oldenburg, A. Ivanov and V. Kotvich, who had already published the results of their preliminary research into Kozlov's finds, fully appreciated their meaning and importance. Not only had Kozlov opened a suburgan (tomb or memorial) but in doing so had opened a whole new field of orientalism, Tangut studies.

To this day there are no more than a few dozen specialists in the history and culture of the lost civilisation of the Tanguts; in Tangut language and literature even less. In this catalogue and in the exhibition itself we have done our best to ensure that as much information as possible about the history, culture and art of the Tangut people has been included.

The first chapter of the catalogue tells the fascinating story of how this ancient city, buried for more than six hundred years beneath the desert sands, came to be discovered by Kozlov and his lifelong search which brought him at last to Khara Khoto. As early as the 1880s, Kozlov had been intrigued by rumors of its existence. Driven by a passion for travel and discovery, he gradually improved his professional skills from one expedition to the next. The profession of 'traveller' no longer exists and therefore Kozlov's career is in itself a curiosity in our day and age.

Another essay in the catalogue describes the history of the Tangut Empire, which, emerging in 982 A.D. on the northwestern borders of the Chinese Song Empire, developed into a threatening, warlike neighbour of the Chinese. In the

1030s the Tanguts conquered Uighur territory, which included the city of Khara Khoto. The increasing prosperity and strength of the Tangut Empire during the tenth and eleventh centuries brought with it the conscious creation of their individual national culture.

It was probably early in the thirteenth century, before 1227, when the Tanguts were overrun by Genghis Khan, that a suburgan was constructed outside the wall to the northwest of the city. In it were buried – together with their owner – the treasures discovered by Kozlov, the bulk of which consisted of Buddhist art and literature. What branches of Buddhism and Buddhist art do these works represent? What are their iconographic and stylistic particularities? What links exist between them and the surrounding cultures of China, Tibet and Central Asia? How do we explain the concentration within one stūpa of works of art so varied in content and style? These issues are addressed by the articles which follow.

The Tanguts themselves described their position as being "between Tibet and China." This description captures precisely one of the most outstanding characteristics of the paintings from Khara Khoto, which is discussed in depth in the catalogue's essay on the art of the Tangut Empire.

Some of the Khara Khoto pictures contain valuable source material for the study of the history of Xi Xia (the Chinese name for the Tangut state), while the representations of donors and monks constitute a portrait gallery of a thousand years ago. Xi Xia has long since disappeared, but its art remains.

One part of the exhibition is dedicated to the works of artists whom we presume were members of a separate school within the small border town of Khara Khoto. Naïvety, a lack of finesse, the compositional mimicking of 'metropolitan' models, and iconographical errors mark this group of 'provincial' pictures. However exquisite and exceptional we may find the collection as a whole, it is these particular pictures which come to us as the living voice of a small medieval town in Central Asia.

The Khara Khoto collection also contains a group of non-Buddhist artifacts. Some are included in the exhibition, amongst them the Portrait of a Nobleman (Cat. No. 62) considered one of the Hermitage's great masterpieces.

Non-Buddhist scrolls offer an insight into other important aspects of Tangut art and culture.

The catalogue's authors have resisted the temptation to offer

merely flowery descriptions of the exhibits. They have chosen instead to see the pictures in their historical perspective and have treated the exhibits in the context of cultural history, in an attempt to make full use of the unique opportunity afforded us by Kozlov's fortuitous discovery. For the "Illustrious" suburgan (stūpa), as it has come to be known, contained the essence of the culture of the Tanguts.

This catalogue contains a description and an iconographic study of every item in the exhibition. It is moreover the first descriptive account of the Khara Khoto collection since Oldenburg's incomplete account of 1914, and the first ever attempt at a full interpretation. My colleague at the Hermitage, Dr. Maria L. Rudova and myself occasionally differ on questions of dating, subject and iconography. The catalogue, therefore, does not reflect conclusive results of our study of the Khara Khoto treasure, but rather work in progress.

The Hermitage has released for the first time works of art which are practically unknown, even to many specialists. A large number of the pictures in this exhibition have never been published previously. Thus Lost Empire of the Silk Road – Buddhist Art from Khara Khoto offers a unique opportunity to admire beautiful works of art hardly ever accessible to the public, and is an event of real academic importance.

We have chosen to use the diacritical marks for the Sanskrit words and the Pinyin transcription for the Chinese words.

The exhibition has been prepared by the Curator of the Khara Khoto collection, Dr. Kira Fyodorovna Samosyuk, and the Curator of the Dunhuang collection, Dr. Maria Leonidovna Rudova. The majority of the paintings were restored in the 1960s by N. N. Maksimova. The head of the Drawings Restoration Workshop, Valentina Aleksandrovna Kozyreva, her assistants, Elena Grigorevna Shishkova and Olga Vsevolodovna Mashneva, and the framer, Margarita Fyodorovna Kovalyova, prepared the pictures for display. Head of the Workshop of Monumental Art, Evgeniya Grigorevna Sheynina, and her assistants, Elena Ivanovna Ter-Oganyan and Marianna Pavlovna Vinokurova, prepared and packed the clay sculptures for transit. The Chemistry Laboratory analysed the pigments and binders in the tangka Ḍakinī (Cat. No. 35), which was restored especially for this exhibition.

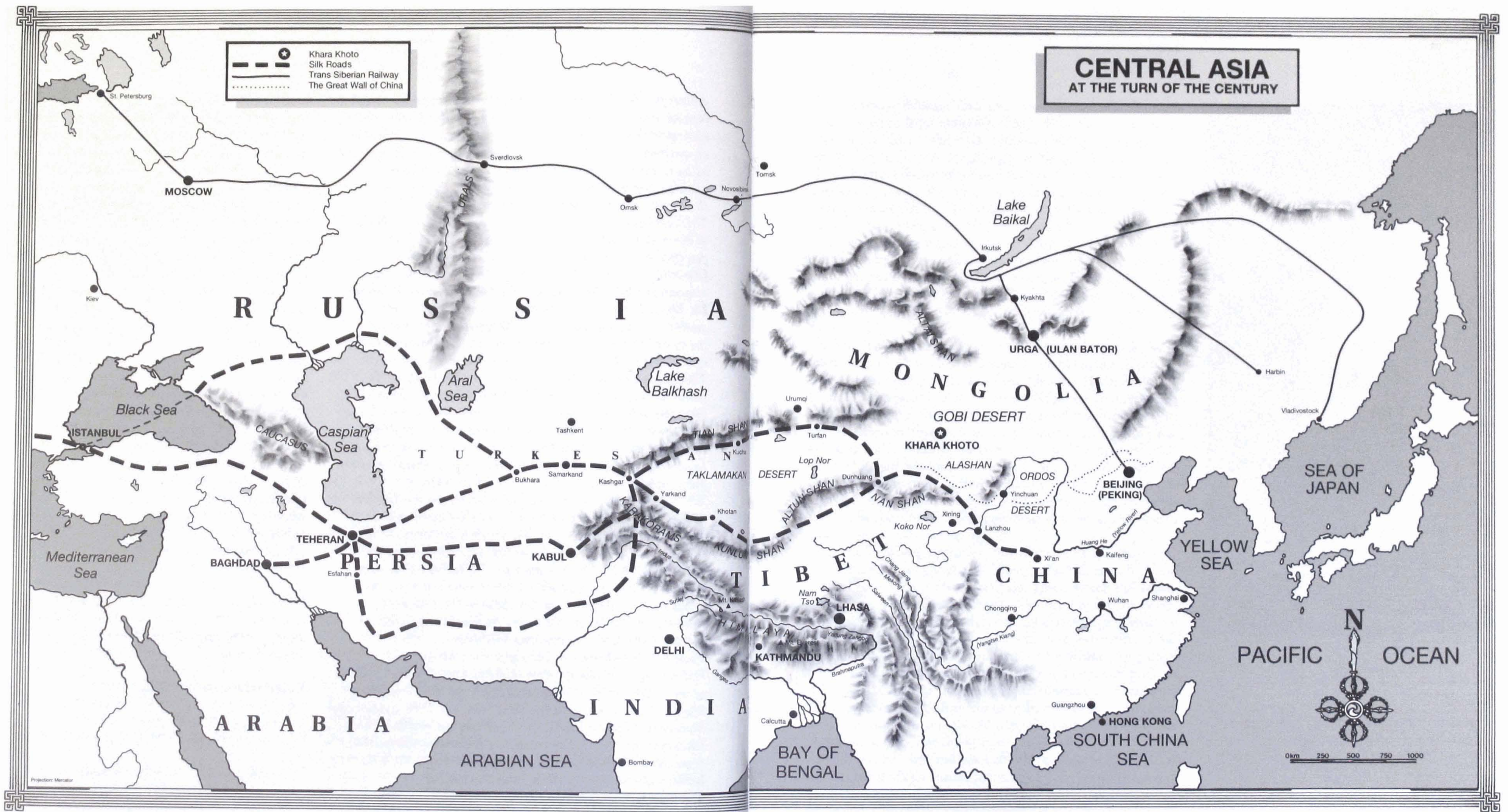
The organisers are grateful to the staff of the Geographical Society, who have provided diary material, photographs and negatives pertaining to the Kozlov expedition.

We also acknowledge the assistance of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, which made available Tibetan texts and engravings; Professor Evgeny Ivanovich Kychanov, who wrote the article on the history of the State of Great Xia and the entries on the Tangut manuscripts, as well as offering all manner of advice; Dr. Lev Savitsky, who wrote the entries on the Tibetan manuscripts; Dr. Lev Nikolaevich Menshikov, who allowed us to use an unpublished article on the engravings illustrating the Chinese texts from Khara Khoto; and Dr. Margarita Iosifovna Vorobyova-Desyatovskaya, Keeper of Manuscripts, and a specialist on Buddhist manuscripts from Central Asia. We also wish to thank our colleagues in the Oriental Department of the Hermitage, Maria Lvovna Menshikova, for helping with the organisation and Liana Babayan, who typed the text.

Finally we acknowledge the creative artistry with which the photographer Anatoly Fyodorovich Syagin has prepared all the catalogue illustrations, as well as fine photographic prints from the original negatives by Kozlov.

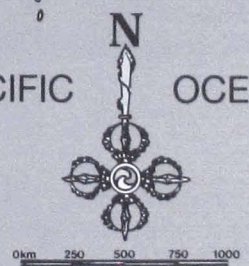
I would like to express a special thanks to Francesca von Habsburg whose charming and enthusiastic manner was an inspiration to us all. Likewise Irene Martin and Marina Djabbarzade of the Thyssen-Bornemisza Foundation with whom we were in frequent contact, were extremely helpful and provided valuable assistance throughout. It has been a great satisfaction for me and my colleagues at the Oriental Department of the State Hermitage Museum and the Institute of Oriental Studies to see years of fascinating research on the Khara Khoto collection finally materialise into a beautiful exhibition with a beautiful catalogue. Working with the Thyssen-Bornemisza Foundation has been a challenge and a pleasure.

Kira Fyodorovna Samosyuk



—●— Khara Khoto
— Silk Roads
— Trans Siberian Railway
..... The Great Wall of China

CENTRAL ASIA
AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY



The historical Buddha Gautama (or Śākyamuni) lived and taught in North India in the 6th century B.C. He was the son of a prominent elder in the small republic of Śākya (in present day Nepal), hence the epithet 'Śākyamuni' (Sage of Śākya) (Fig. 1). He left home at the age of twenty-nine and for six years lived as a wandering ascetic, searching for an answer to the existential questions posed by the human condition of birth, sickness, ageing and death. Having studied with the leading teachers of his time, his questions remained unresolved. So he sat beneath a large pipal tree a few miles from the town of Gaya (in present day Bihar state) and vowed not to rise again until he had found an answer. Seven days later he awakened from the 'sleep' of delusion and experienced *bodhi* (enlightenment) – hence the 'bodhi-tree'.

The Buddha's enlightenment was not a mystical vision of a transcendent reality but a fourfold insight into the nature of the human dilemma and the way out of the dilemma. His teaching is a systematic development of that vision. It focuses on recognising the suffering implicit in existence, the psycho-spiritual origins of that suffering (that is, craving and ignorance), the ending of suffering and its origins (that is, *nirvāṇa*), and the path of ethics, meditation and wisdom that leads to such a goal. These are known as the 'four noble truths'. The Buddha's doctrine is one of liberation realised through personal practice. Such practice is realised by the efforts of the individual and has no recourse to God or any other external agency.

Over the following centuries, this doctrine of spiritual liberation spread throughout the Indian subcontinent, then into Central Asia, China, Southeast Asia, Tibet, Korea and Japan. Being more a system of practice rather than dogma, it adapted freely to the different historical and cultural settings it encountered. While the basic teachings on suffering and ending of suffering remained common to all forms of Buddhism, the path of spiritual practice evolved diverse methodologies and philosophies appropriate to the changing circumstances. Seen from this perspective, Buddhist iconography reveals not merely stylistic developments but also an imagistic representation of the evolution of Buddhist thought.

For the first five hundred years after his death, the Buddha was not represented as a human figure at all. His presence was suggested by images of an empty throne, footprints, or the tree beneath which he gained enlightenment. The emphasis in this an-iconic tradition was on the transcendence of the Buddha, his



2. Guanyin, Moon in Water
(*Avalokiteśvara Chinese Style*).
Cat. No. 46.



3. Eleven-faced, Eight-armed
Avalokiteśvara. Cat. No. 12.



complete liberation in *nirvāṇa*, which by definition is beyond all verbal or pictorial representation. Such a vision suggests a Buddhism dominated by a community of monks whose aim in life was to achieve a comparable detachment and freedom from the bondage of worldly existence. Since the origin of such bondage was seen to be attachment to a sense of personality of self, one can understand the reluctance to depict the Buddha in a personified form.

Ironically, it was Greek settlers in the Indus valley region who first conceived of and produced human images of Gautama, in the form of the Greek god Apollo. Although the heroic, Grecian element in Buddhist iconography can be traced through early Central Asian art, this tendency was replaced within a couple of centuries by imagery modelled on the traditional Indian gods. The inception of this iconic phase of Buddhist art coincides with the emergence of the Mahāyāna ('Great Vehicle') tradition. Mahāyāna Buddhism sought to bring the Buddha back to earth. Instead of stressing the transcendent freedom of Gautama, it emphasised his love and compassion for all living things, qualities that found expression in the tender gaze of the early Gandharan statues and the soft, feminine contours of the seated Buddhas. This phase in the history of Buddhism runs parallel with the emergence of Buddhism as a popular religion, a faith and practice available to all rather than a philosophical and contemplative discipline for monastics.

It was not long before the solitary figure of the historical Buddha exploded into a diverse array of *bodhisattvas*. The classic definition of a Bodhisattva is a person whose life is dedicated to enlightenment for the sake of others. Symbolically, though, *bodhisattvas* came to represent the different qualities of the Buddha's enlightenment. For example, Avalokiteśvara (Figs. 2, 3) symbolised the Buddha's compassion; Mañjuśrī (Fig. 4) his wisdom, and Samantabhadra (Fig. 5) his eternal goodness. Each of these 'archetypal' *bodhisattvas* were depicted in precise iconographic forms and often became objects of devotion and meditation for those seeking spiritual fulfillment through the realisation of the quality they represented.

In addition to celebrating the diversity of spiritual practices embodied by the *bodhisattvas*, Mahāyāna Buddhism further elaborated the concept of the Buddha. Even the earliest tradition recognised that Gautama was not a unique occurrence but one of a series of Buddhas who periodically appear in the world for the benefit of humanity. The Mahāyāna took this idea even fur-





ther and declared that the destiny of each living being is Buddhahood. Moreover, instead of vanishing into the transcendent *nirvāṇa* at death, each Buddha is merely a transient manifestation of an eternal Buddha presence, which continues to assume form wherever there is suffering to be assuaged. This vision thereby assumes a plurality of Buddhas, many of whom embody particular aspects of Buddhahood. Thus we find, for example, the 'Medicine Buddha' (Fig. 6), who personifies the healing capacity of enlightenment, and the so-called 'Dhyāni (meditation) Buddhas', who stand for the five basic types of enlightenment.

The most frequently represented 'dhyānibuddha' is Amitābha, whose name means 'Boundless Light'. According to Mahāyāna of Sukhāvatī in the West, his legend recounts how, as a *bodhisattva*, he made a vow that anyone who recited his name would be born after a death in Sukhāvatī, where conditions would be far more conducive to the attaining of enlightenment than on earth. This Buddha attained a vast popular following, particularly in China, where Buddhism arrived from India via Central Asia shortly after the time of Jesus. This 'cult' of Amitābha likewise spread to Tibet, Korea and Japan.

The Buddha Amitābha is closely associated with the *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara.

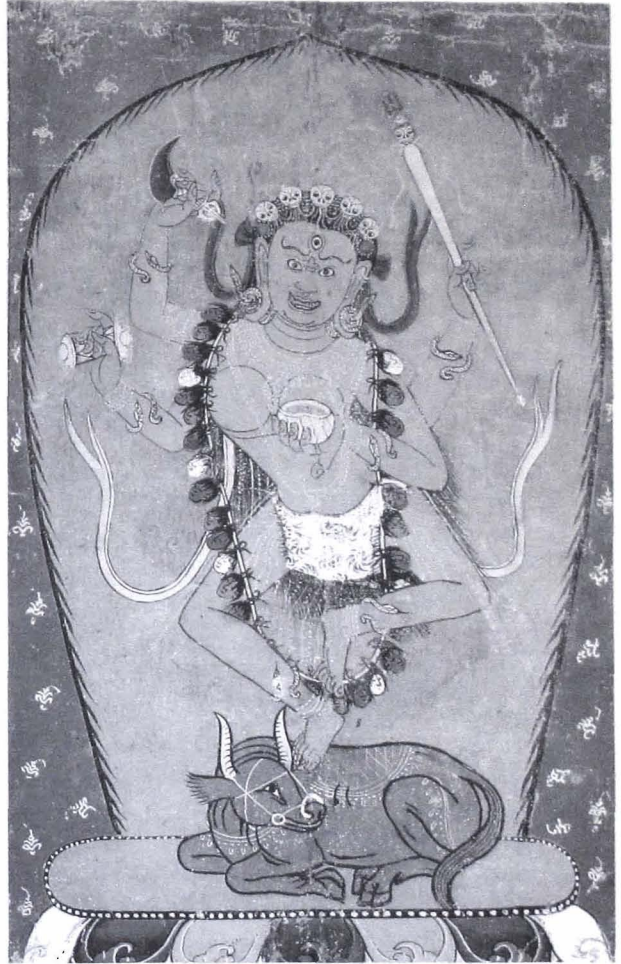
Developing alongside the devotional worship of Buddhas and *bodhisattvas* was the Tantric tradition. Tantrism is a further development of Mahāyāna Buddhism which first appeared in India in the early centuries after Jesus. It was founded on the *tantras*, texts written in a coded, symbolic language, which taught the use of *mantras*, visualisation, and yogic exercises to realise enlightenment. The *tantras* voiced the most radical challenge to the monastic, ascetic ideal of a transcendent Buddha dissolved in *nirvāṇa*. They recognised instead the immanence of enlightenment in any human situation, however humble and worldly. Instead of renouncing the world, they emphasised transforming experience through imagination and transmutating psychological and physical energy through yogic practice into Buddhahood. The adepts of Tantrism were called *mahāsiddhas* (greatly realised beings), who are depicted as sensuous men and women who challenge the orthodox monks and nuns by their profane and eccentric lifestyles (Fig. 7).

Tantrism gave birth to one of the richest dimensions of Buddhist iconography: that of *maṇḍalas*, wrathful deities and *ḍākinīs*. In accordance with the principle of transformation, the *tantras*

recognised that even the most negative and destructive aspects of human consciousness were patterns of psycho-physical energy that could be transmuted into enlightenment. This insight gave rise to images of Buddhahood as violent and terrifying beings often carrying weapons and trampling on other forms of life. These 'wrathful deities' symbolise the sacred dimension within the profane that can be revealed by transformative imagination and yogic exercises. The tantric deity *Samvara*, for instance, is a symbolic transformation of the emotion of sensual desire into the form of a Buddha. *Samvara* is also considered as the 'wrathful' aspect of *Avalokiteśvara*, the benign *bodhisattva* of compassion. Desire and compassion, therefore, are shown to be rooted in a common nature, which can be turned either to egocentric ends (which result in suffering) or altruistic ends (which result in enlightenment).

In contrast to the patriarchal bias of monastic Buddhism, the *tantras* celebrated the feminine, recognising the highest principle of enlightenment in female forms known as *dākinīs* (sky dancers) (Fig. 8). Even Buddhahood, as the final integration of wisdom and compassion, came to be represented in the image of a male and female deity in sexual union. And enlightenment, as the harmonised fulfillment of inner and outer reality, was depicted in the form of a perfectly balanced *maṇḍala*.

Each detail in the iconographic depiction of a Buddha or *bodhisattva* has a range of symbolic meanings. The lotus flower, for example, represents compassion; the sword of *Mañjuśrī*, the wisdom that severs delusion. The five skull tiara of the 'wrathful deities' stands for the transmutation of the five main conflicting emotions into the wisdoms of the five *dhyāni* Buddhas. The skull itself is a symbol of selflessness, which, in Buddhist philosophy, is the key insight that allows for the possibility of transformation. The colours of the deities also indicate a complex of different meanings. The five principal colours are blue, red, green, yellow and white, which correspond to the different types of enlightenment, symbolised by the *dhyāni* Buddhas. The *maṇḍalas* are likewise divided according to this colour scheme. Red, for example, is the colour of *Amitābha*, which indicates the enlightened transformation of sensual desire – albeit in the benign aspect of a seated Buddha rather than the wrathful aspect of *Samvara* (Fig. 9). Although Tantrism – or, more accurately, *Vajrayāna* ('Diamond Vehicle') Buddhism – made its way from India to Central Asia and China, it took root and flowered most abundantly in Tibet. For the Tibetans, the tantric

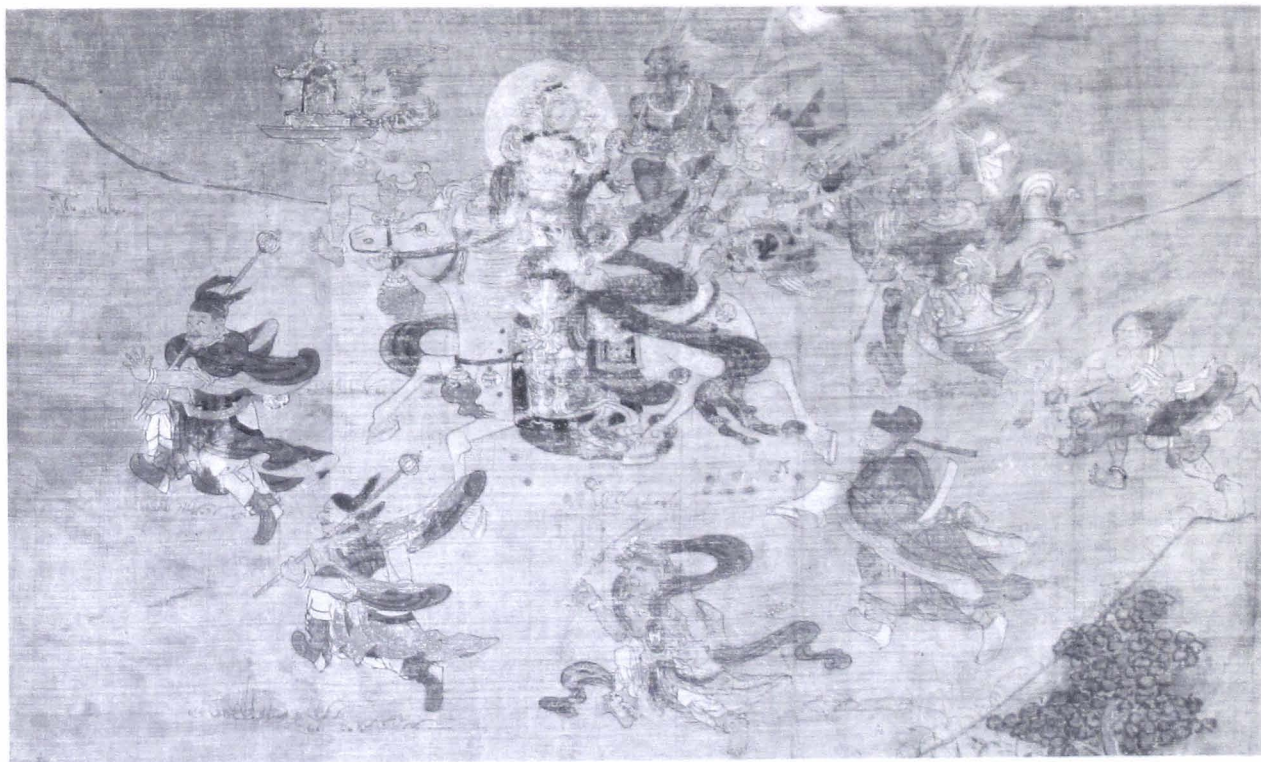




teachings were (and are) the culmination of the Indian Buddhist tradition. Consequently, their iconography is rich in tantric images. Like all Buddhist art, that of the Tangut Empire reveals a complex world of Buddhist thought and practice within a particular society at a particular time. On one level are representations of Buddhas such as Amitābha that serve as objects of devotion for the populace at large, providing solace and a promise of fulfillment in the afterlife. We also find images of Vaiśravaṇa (the Indian god of wealth), whose cult served more the material than spiritual aspirations of the people. In a similar vein, the protector deities (*lokapāla* and *dharmapāla*) guarded both the place as well as its inhabitants and traditions against destruction and degeneration, thereby providing a sense of security (Fig. 10). But we also witness tantric deities, *ḍakṇīs* and *maṇḍalas* which point to the presence of monks, nuns and lay adepts, for whom

the images are symbols of transformation, keys which unlock the spiritual resources within their own consciousness.

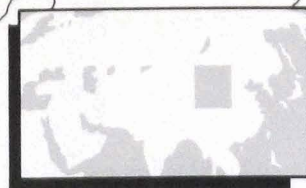
From the perspective of a practising Buddhist all these works of Chinese, Central Asian and Tibetan art would not have been valued so much for their aesthetic qualities but rather as ciphers for enlightenment – whether achieved in this life through intense tantric discipline, or in the afterlife through faith in Amitābha. No matter how exotic the forms, these paintings, scrolls and statues are attempts to illustrate the compassionate understanding realised by the Buddha beneath the bodhi-tree in India 2,500 years ago. For Buddhists this Buddha-mind was as immanent in those vanished inhabitants of Khara Khoto who looked upon these images in their brief Central Asian kingdom in the 12th century, as it is for those of us who admire them today in the 20th century.



THE TRAVELS OF KOZLOV

MONGOLIA-SICHUAN EXPEDITION 1907-1909

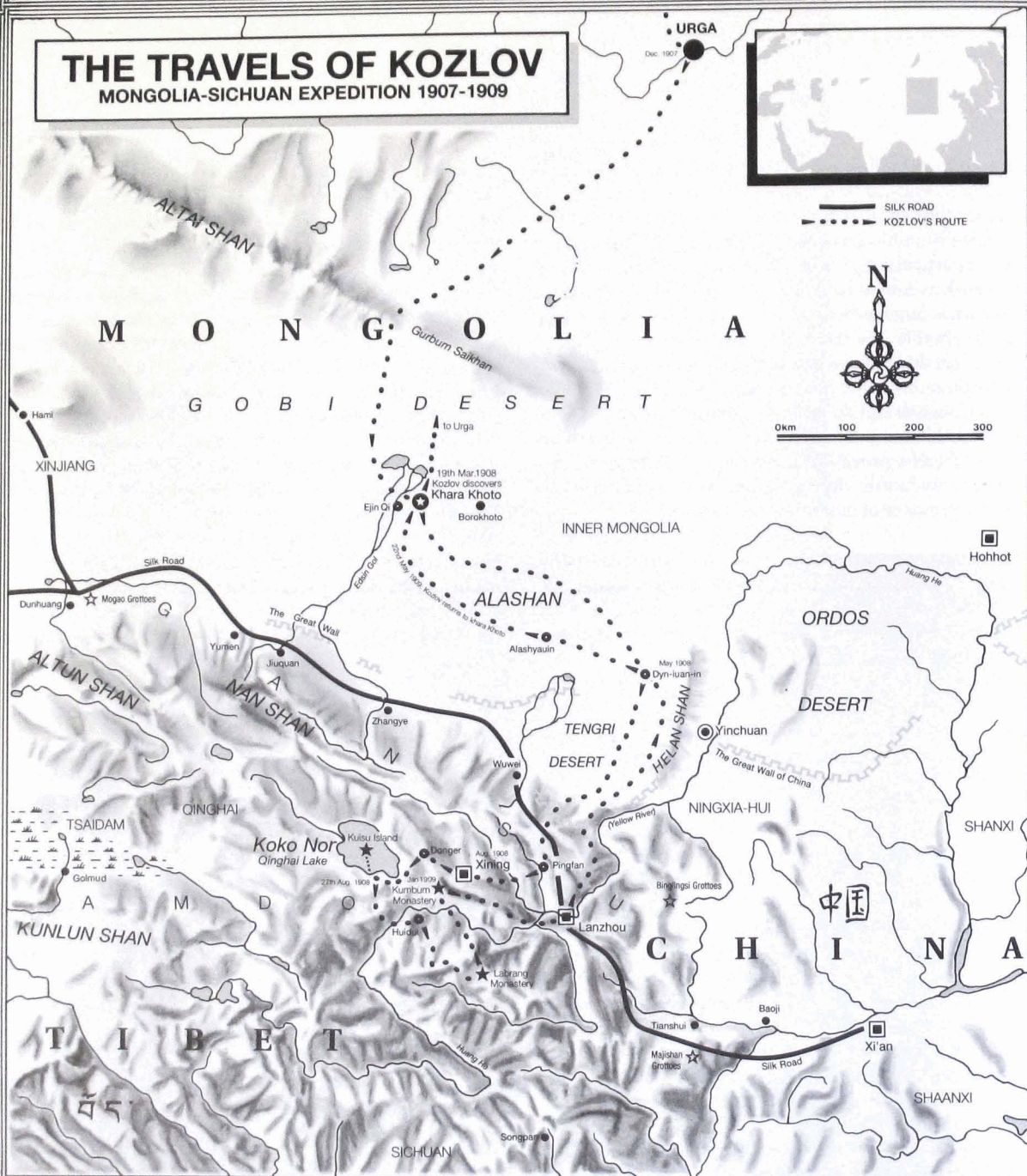
URGA
Dec. 1907



— SILK ROAD
- - - KOZLOV'S ROUTE



0km 100 200 300



The Discovery of Khara Khoto

Kira Fyodorovna Samosyuk

Early Central Asian Studies

The end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century was a period of extraordinary activity in the study of Central Asia. The perseverance and courage of the explorers invite comparison with Columbus. Their zeal equally recalls those distant, legendary times when pilgrims, drawn by the teaching of Buddha, flocked to India.

Around the turn of the century expeditions were launched into Asia practically every year. The Germans, the English, the French, the Japanese and the Swedes put huge efforts into the geographical study of the northern and southern oases of Eastern Turkestan, Dunhuang, Western China, Mongolia and Tibet. Inevitably, scientific interests became intertwined with the political ambitions of the various governments.

Scientific interest in Central Asian antiquity began in Russia towards the end of the 1880s when the Russian consul in Kashgar, N.F. Petrovsky, despatched to S.F. Oldenburg, a future academician and at that time a budding orientalist, a single birchbark manuscript of the first century B.C., written in *Kharosti* – an ancient Indian script.

Academician V.V. Radlov, speaking at the Twelfth International Congress of Orientalists in Rome, described finds made in Eastern Turkestan, as a result of which committees were formed in many countries to further the archeological exploration of this area of Central Asia. The Imperial Russian Geographical Society and the Russian Academy of Sciences financed several expeditions: D.A. Klements in 1898; A.I. Kokhanovsky in 1906-7; M.M. Berezovsky in 1906-7; S.F. Oldenburg in 1909-10 and 1914-15; and S.E. Malov in 1909-11 and 1913-15.

The intrepid N.M. Przhevalsky made five great journeys into Central Asia. I do not know whether English schoolchildren today read of the journeys of Sir Mark Aurel Stein; but Przhevalsky's books were compulsive reading for me in my early years, and I can still see in my mind's eye the fine illustrations of his companion V.I. Roborovsky. Imagine then the impression made by Przhevalsky's exploits on a young man called Pyotr Kuzmich Kozlov (Fig. 11), living at the time in one of the most god-forsaken corners of provincial Russia, on the Sloboda estate in Smolensk Province. Przhevalsky came to Sloboda in 1882, and a year later became its owner. "When I first set eyes on Przhevalsky," wrote Kozlov, "I recognised immediately his

powerful figure, his imperious, noble and handsome face. This dedicated explorer, this sensitive connoisseur of the world of nature, the peerless Przhevalsky aroused in me a burning passion for the Asian natural world; I fell ineluctably under the spell of this pure and unaffected man." Przhevalsky became not just a teacher, but a surrogate father for Kozlov, opening a whole new world for him. Kozlov's relationship with Przhevalsky, in its infinite devotion, obedience and respect, is reminiscent of that of a novice towards his teacher in the Buddhist tradition. In the autumn of 1883 the twenty year old Kozlov accompanied Przhevalsky for the first time, on the latter's fourth expedition to Central Asia. They made two further journeys together – in 1889-91 and 1893-95. Four years later Kozlov undertook his own expedition to Mongolia and Tibet, in 1899-1901. Shortly before the expedition departed, the President of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society, P.P. Semyonov Tyan-Shansky, wrote to Kozlov: "Remember, my dear Pyotr Kuzmich, that the development of our relations with Tibet is a matter of immense importance, and it is in your hands. In that citadel of Central Asia the name of Russia must be upheld not by threats, but by humility and honour..."

Kozlov's 1899 Expedition

The journey proper began in the Altai, from where the caravan set off to cross the Gobi Desert. The expedition broke into three groups, one of which followed the course of the river Edzin-Gol – the same on whose lower reaches lie the ruins of Khara Khoto. This route had been pioneered as early as 1886 by G.N. Potanin, who first heard about the existence of Khara Khoto from local Torgut tribesmen; they described the ruins of a town a day's journey to the east of the eastern branch of the river Edzina. "Here, they tell me, one can see a small *kerim* – that is, the walls of a small town, and nearby many traces of buildings buried in the sand. By digging they discover objects of silver. The *kerim* is surrounded by a huge area of loose dry sand, without any water." In his book *Mongolia and Amdo and the Dead Town of Khara Khoto*,¹ Kozlov relates that A.N. Kaznakov, one of the members of the expedition, tried in 1900 to gain some additional information about Khara Khoto, but "the natives denied the existence of any ruins in the area, commenting: 'You Russians want to know more than we do ourselves about the place we live in.'" The Torguts also contrived to con-

11. Kozlov in the 1910s.



ceal the location of Khara Khoto from V.A. Obruchev, who visited the area in 1892. As a result, in 1900 Kozlov's attempts to find the lost town ended in failure. Not that the expedition was unsuccessful. It explored Chaidam in Northern Tibet and set up a meteorological station there, it reached the source of the Huanghe (Yellow River), the upper reaches of the Yangtziang and the Mekong River basin, where it spent six months. They named the ridge forming the watershed between the Yangtze and the Mekong in honour of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society.

The expedition lasted two and a half years and covered ten thousand kilometres. It carried out topographical surveys and astronomical observations. It mapped mountain ranges and the sources of some of the world's great rivers, filling in many blank areas on the maps of Asia. At the same time it gathered large amounts of material for zoological, entomological, ornithological, botanical, geological and ethnographic collections, which are now kept in the museums of Moscow and St. Petersburg. Behind these practical achievements lay a good deal of laborious routine, hardship and danger which often came unexpectedly, and in a variety of forms. On occasions the expedi-

tion was threatened with disaster when it came under attack from hostile local tribesmen. They were met with anything from friendly greetings and hospitality to gunfire. The Russian press printed rumours that the expedition had perished, while the Chinese authorities in Xining were quite convinced that they had come to a tragic end. From various areas in Tibet, as Kozlov wrote, came rumours, all of which agreed on one point – that disaster had befallen them.

Then, in the spring of 1901, a detachment of men on horseback led by officials specially commissioned by the XIIIth Dalai Lama caught up with Kozlov. For the first time, a Russian explorer sent greetings and gifts to the Dalai Lama from the Imperial Russian Geographical Society.

"Thanks to Tibetan assistance, the expedition was fortunate enough to further broaden the scope of its geographical research throughout the rest of its journey."

They made a triumphal return, first to Urga (Ulan Bator), then to Kyakhta – the first Russian town on the border with Mongolia – and finally to St. Petersburg. For this expedition the Imperial Russian Geographical Society awarded Kozlov the Constantine Gold Medal.²



13. Drawing of the XIIIth Dalai Lama, by N. Ya. Kozhevnikov



14. The XIIIth Dalai Lama (July 1905).



15. Schematic map of the Route of the Mongol-Sichuan expedition March-April 1908, (detail showing Edzin-Gol Valley): 1. Sogo Nor Lake, 2. Camp of Torgut-beile, 3. Khara Koto, 4. 1901 Route

16. The Mongolian prince (Torgut-beile) Baldyn-itsasak with attendants

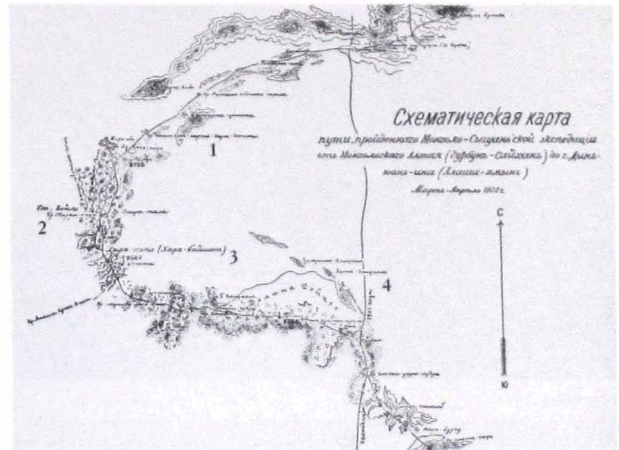
First Meeting with the Dalai Lama

On the 5th of April 1905 (old style)¹ Captain Kozlov was sent, on the personal orders of Czar Nicholas II to Urga, to meet the exiled Dalai Lama.² He carried greetings from the Imperial Russian Geographical Society. Kozlov met the Dalai Lama first on July 1, then regularly over a period of two months. They exchanged *badaks* (pieces of silk, given as a mark of respect), and the artist N.Ya. Kozhevnikov made several pencil sketches of the Dalai Lama, two of which, together with the Dalai Lama's *badak*, were handed to Kozlov "for presentation to His Majesty the Emperor."³ (Figs. 13, 14). The sketches are now in the Hermitage collection and have been published by G.A. Leonov. The Russian explorer was much impressed by the intellect, erudition and gentility of the Tibetan leader. Kozlov was presented with a valuable collection of artefacts for the Geographical Society, and himself received from the Dalai Lama two bronze statues, one of *Buddha on the Lion's Throne*, the other of the Maitreya, together with an admonition that he should keep them always by him – particularly the Maitreya, the protector of travellers. Kozlov was to meet the Dalai Lama again, but not until after the discovery of Khara Khoto.

The Mongol-Sichuan Expedition 1907-1909

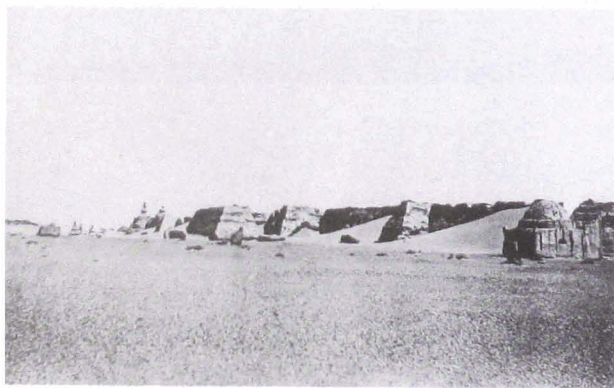
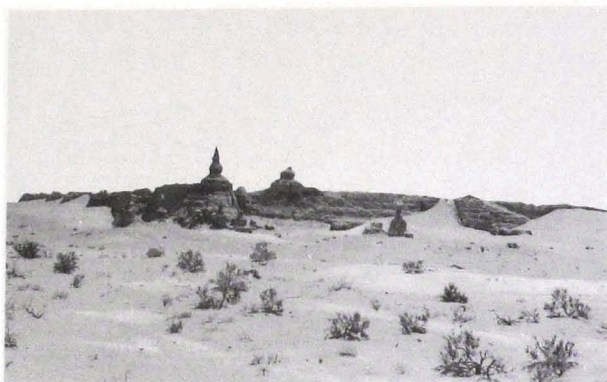
Kozlov's expedition to Mongolia and Sichuan of 1907-1909 is described in his book. Like all Kozlov's writing it makes lively, evocative and romantic reading. Kozlov's talents as a writer go well beyond the value and variety of the subject-matter. "A sedentary life for a traveller is like a cage for a bird," his book begins. "... What real happiness I found, face to face with the wildness and grandeur of the natural world of Asia. What blissful moments I knew, in what exquisite settings I found myself, in a wilderness of mountain and forest, with only the sound of rustling stream or roaring cascade..."⁴

On the 28th of December 1907 Kozlov found himself once more in Kyakhta, the last outpost of Russia, on the Mongolian border. From Kyakhta embassies set out for China, expeditions for Central Asia, Russian trade caravans and occasional Buryat pilgrims for the lands of the Buddhist East. Within Kyakhta was the Chinese trading post of Maimaicheng, a source of some considerable prosperity; the town could boast a strong community of wealthy merchants and an intelligentsia, who had establish-



17. The first sight of Khara Khoto.

18. Two stūpas along the roadside.



19. The ruins of Khara Khoto, from the South-west.

ed a branch of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society. This latest expedition had been funded by the Russian treasury with thirty thousand rubles, and was charged with exploring the geography and natural phenomena of Central and Southern Mongolia, the Kokonor lake and surrounding area, and North-western Sichuan. The Moscow University geologist A. A. Chernov, the surveyor Captain Napalkov, and the botanist and entomologist S. S. Chetyrkin were appointed to join Kozlov, together with an escort of ten soldiers and Transbaikalian Cossacks. Northern Mongolia on the first day of 1908 greeted the travellers with a temperature of minus 47 °C. After a stop in Urga to hire Mongolian guides and send on baggage to an advance base, Kozlov's party, travelling light, set off towards the lower reaches of the river Edzin-Gol. On the southern slopes of the Mongolian Altai they paused for a ten-day break near the camp of the Mongolian prince Baldyn-tszasak (Fig. 16), who made the party welcome. Kozlov had the knack of winning the confidence of the local inhabitants, though this may doubtless be attributed as much to the generous gifts he brought as to his own personal charm. As for the native guides, he paid them well. Kozlov gives a lively account of his talks with the Prince, who tried to dissuade him from exploring the lower reaches of the Edzin-Gol and did not disguise his suspicion that there must be something there of particular interest to Kozlov. The latter had no option but to tell the Prince about Khara Khoto. Baldyn-tszasak, as it turned out, had heard stories about the ruins and knew that the local Mongol Torgut tribesmen searched there for hidden treasure and did their best to hide Khara Khoto and the ancient road that passed through it. The crafty Prince requested Kozlov not to give away to the Torgut and their ruler, the Torgut-beile, that he had passed on any information. He then supplied Kozlov with guides and camels. Kozlov felt a sense of mounting excitement; Khara Khoto had always been, as he wrote, "the object of his dreams," which he had confided only to his closest friends. Baldyn-tszasak, on parting, whispered in his ear: "Farewell. I am sure that you will discover Khara Khoto and find there all manner of interesting things." They were prophetic words.

At the height of the spring bird migration, Kozlov's party arrived in the basin of the Edzin-Gol. The interpreter Badmazhanov was despatched with a *badak* and gifts to the Torgut-beile, the ruler of the local administrative unit (*khoshung*), in return for which Kozlov was promised help, support and guides

20. Remains of the mosque.

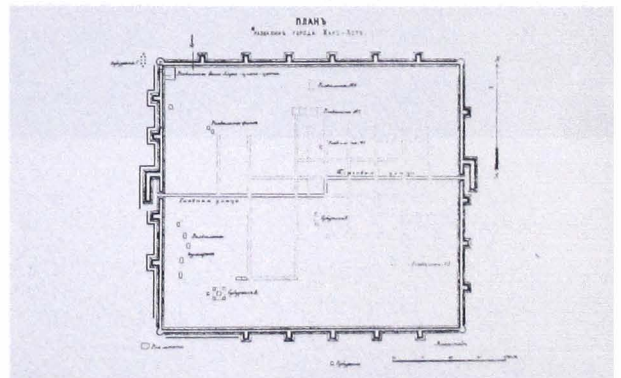
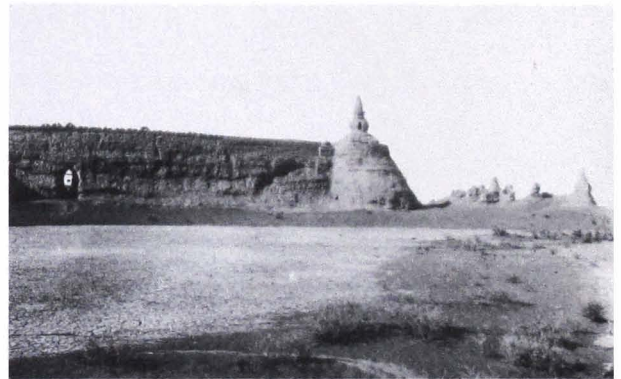
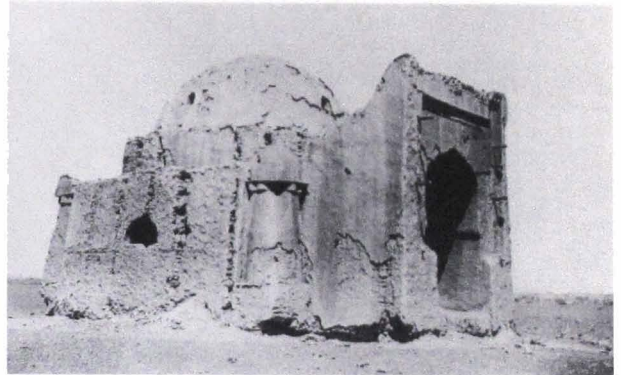
21. The Northwestern Gate.

22. Plan of Khara Khoto (from P.K. Kozlov's *Mongolia and Amdo and the Dead Town of Khara Khoto*)

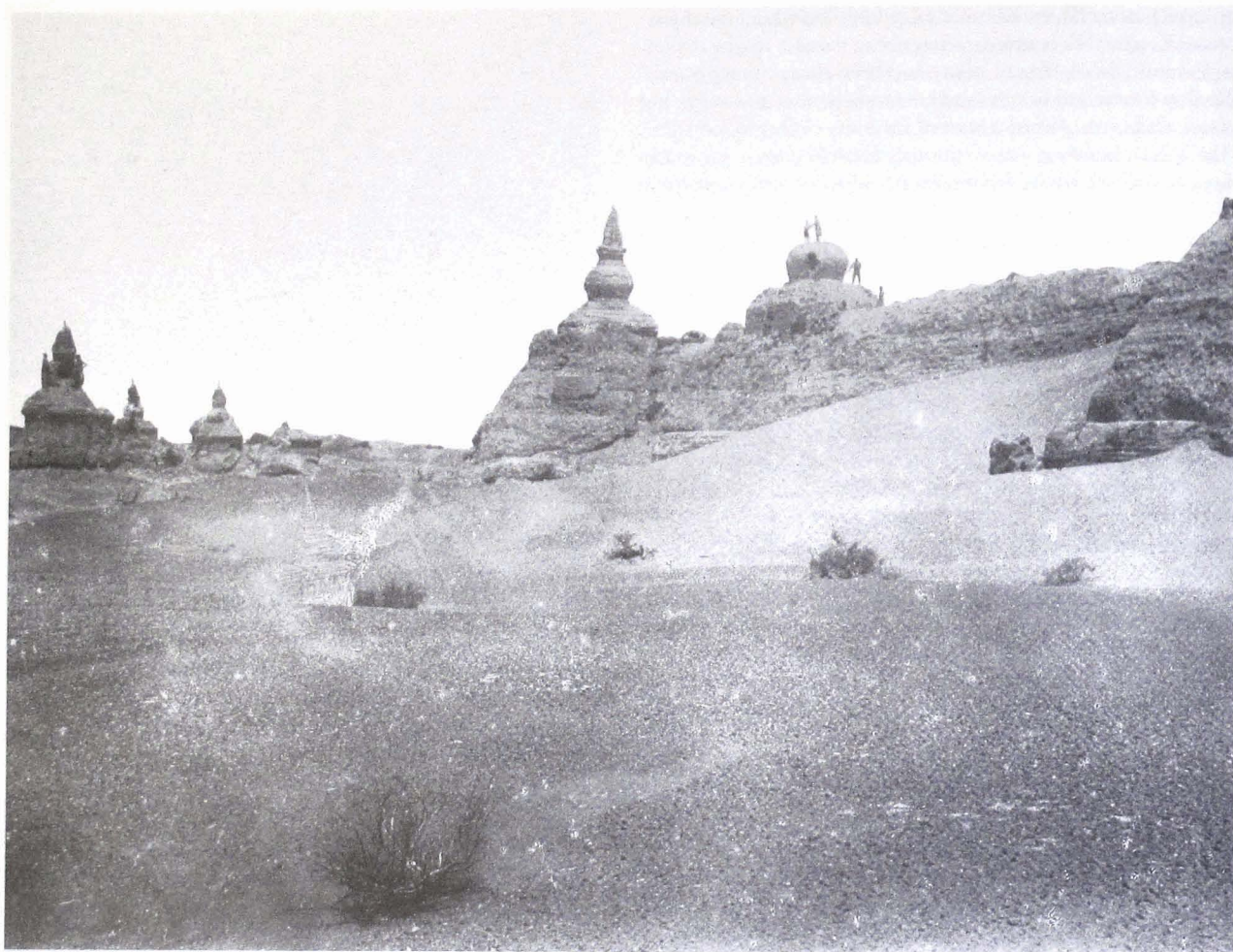
to take him to Khara Khoto. "I couldn't have been happier," wrote Kozlov. "Ever since reading about the ruins in the explorer Potanin's book, Khara Khoto had been always on my mind." Kozlov proceeded to question everyone he met about the lost town, and even offered a reward for every object found there. The locals, however, superstitiously fearful of even approaching the walls of Khara Khoto, remained stubbornly unhelpful.

First Sight of the 'Black Town' of Khara Khoto

On the 19th of March, the expedition, travelling light, was brought for the first time to the site by an outstanding guide called Bata. The ruins lay a short distance from a dry river bed, and surrounded by desert sand, whose rolling contours induced a sort of dizziness, a sense of eternity. The vain, the trivial were forgotten. Tamarisk bushes gave the only hint of life. The track they were following was none other than the ancient road connecting China with the West, along which, some six hundred years earlier, the Venetian merchant Marco Polo had passed, pausing in the living town of Edzina – the name of Khara Khoto during the Mongolian Yuan Empire of 1280-1368 – and describing it thus: "From Kanpichu (Ganzhou) it is twelve days' journey to the town of Edzina. It stands in the northern part of the Tangut region, where the sandy wilderness begins. The people are pagans, with an abundance of camels and domestic animals... they live not by trade, but off the land. Here travellers must take supplies sufficient for forty days, for, leaving this place, one travels northward through the steppe for forty days, without finding any human habitation or shelter." Kozlov was as unaware at the time that he was following in the footsteps of Marco Polo, as he was of the momentous discoveries that awaited him in Khara Khoto. Here and there along the roadside they came across *stūpas*, traces of irrigation channels and pottery sherds – all of which indicated the proximity of the town (Fig. 18). Approaching from the west, they passed the remains of a mosque on the right hand side (Figs. 19, 20), and entered the town through the western gateway (Fig. 21). Before them stood Khara Khoto – a huge rectangular open space (Kozlov measured it as 385 by 325 metres), covered with the remnants of buildings and piles of rubbish, several *stūpas* and the foundations of temples. Barely discernible were the outlines of two streets, which Kozlov christened 'Main Street' – running from the Western Gate more or less in a straight line to the Eastern



23. Khara Khoto. View of the north
western corner.



24. *Small Buddhist 'Icon'. One of the first paintings unearthed at the site in 1908.*

Gate, and 'Market Street' – from the Eastern Gate to the centre (Fig. 22). Around the town was an adobe wall, nine to ten metres in height and twelve metres thick at its base, tapering to four metres at the top. At each corner was a tower, each still topped with *stūpas*⁷ (Fig. 23).

The expedition set up camp in the centre of the town. Preliminary surveys established the elevation of the town as 2854 feet above sea level, and its bearings as 41°45'40" N., 101°5'14" E. Next they surveyed the walls and buildings, compiled a preliminary plan, and began some minor excavation of foundations. The buildings were of sun-baked brick, the roofs of cob; the foundations of the temples – of which nothing remained above ground – were of baked clay, the walls – of unbaked. "I shall never forget the sense of delight which filled my heart when, after removing a few shovelfuls of debris in ruined building No. 1, I unearthed a small Buddhist icon, painted on canvas and measuring 0.081 × 0.067 m"⁸ (Fig. 24). Further remarkable finds from the same spot included fragments of hand-written documents in a script which Kozlov had not previously seen, and which became a subject of particular interest for him. Soon after that, in *suburgan* A, more and more books came to light, together with "The Manifestation of Amitābha" on canvas, a "Chinese-style icon on silk", several small clay heads, and a gilded head of the Buddha with dark blue hair.

From the ruins of building No. 3 came pages of Persian manuscripts and a leather binding, which Oldenburg identified as of thirteenth century Persian origin. "We were intrigued by the questions – how old was the 'Dead Town' and who were its inhabitants?", wrote Kozlov. He immediately despatched news of his discovery, and even a few parcels containing texts in Chinese, Tangut and Tibetan, and samples of pictorial art by the Mongolian postal service, to Urga and thence to St. Petersburg. This was followed by a series of enthusiastic letters to the Geographical Society and to Oldenburg. One source of concern was a rumour which had reached him over the steppe that another expedition – possibly Russian, possibly French – was on its way to Khara Khoto. The whole of his career as traveller and explorer of Central Asia had been centred upon the dream of Khara Khoto; his whole life he saw as no more than preparation for its discovery – and now he had achieved that dream, becoming the first European to set foot in the lost town since Marco Polo! His concern turned out to be without foundation. The items sent to St. Petersburg caused a sensation; and, as mentioned above,



К. протесту, въ известная попадаютъ дурная пи-
ща, и животъ, а кровью, по крайню, насыщена въ во-
порядокъ болевше, дурнаго животнаго - жива - животныхъ
дурная животные, распространены, преимущественно
всѣхъ животныхъ. Основанъ, совладка, качества
содержащихъ все еще окрестъ.

Потомъ Багдадская, съ другими монетами, на
востокъ отъ Хара-хото, вѣстима слѣдующая: ъ
то время когда кружится Хара-хото и когда уже
слишкомъ еще дальняя ъ востокъ, направлени въ Дзук-
гоа, Хара-хото предѣлы. и себѣ одинъ восте
ни илие широкой лентой востокъ, востокъ востокъ
рѣки. На востокъ-востокъ востокъ, на востокъ
березу сѣв. рѣки, Багдадская востокъ востокъ-
востокъ, востокъ востокъ востокъ. Востокъ-хото? Востокъ
востокъ востокъ востокъ востокъ востокъ востокъ, востокъ
востокъ востокъ востокъ востокъ востокъ востокъ востокъ
и по востокъ востокъ, востокъ востокъ востокъ востокъ
востокъ востокъ востокъ востокъ востокъ востокъ востокъ
востокъ востокъ востокъ востокъ востокъ востокъ востокъ

люте, одно из двух. Благодаря копей сараваней Кара-то, в Чар, второе - в имени сел. Боро - кото, правды, угрозы эго караване. Это еще больше сдвигает в правый центр, т. е. Кара-кото... вост. его край край Боро, т. е. степь... Должно отравления песками, в сел. южн. с. сел. сел...

Самая первая ископаемая
отсюда Холмская.



Там же образам, ранее доведенным сводились
всходы в речку милу отнесенным, что вода текла
в направлении более широком, но не св. вост. и
восток, или даже южн. вост. (301), фарватер был в В
и вправо в В с в. На краю - там - говорим мы
здесь, куда дошли

26. Kumbum monastery gate with
a group of Tangut descendants.

accounts of the most valuable were immediately published.” Kozlov’s observations showed that sand had blown in to cover the town predominantly from the north, piling up almost to the very top of the northern and eastern walls, so that a camel could climb up one side and down the other. He surmised that two branches of the river must have passed to the north and south of the town, while on the eastern side a road led away to another large town, long since abandoned, called Boro Khoto, and thence by an ancient track across the wilderness of Alashan (Fig. 25). “A forbidding place,” he remarked. The expedition set off along this track on the 30th March, with the intention of resting a while in Dengyuangyin. At the end of July they arrived in Xining, a large town, the residence of the Chinese *qingcai*, who “had charge of the nomads of Kokonor and Northeastern Tibet.” They won the friendship of the *qingcai*, who provided them with travel documents, words of advice, warnings about the dangers ahead, interpreters and additional guards, then sent them on their way towards the lake of Kokonor, the study of which was the expedition’s second main objective. From the middle of the lake rose the island of Kuissu, to which Kozlov and his companions took a boat. On the island they discovered three Buddhist hermit-monks, whom they “frightened out of their wits.” Returning to Xining, Kozlov called in at the monastery of Kumbum (Fig. 26), where the XIIIth Dalai Lama was staying on the way from Beijing to Lhasa. Thus occurred the Russian traveller’s second encounter with the ruler of Tibet. The Dalai Lama evinced a lively interest in Kozlov’s boat trip across Kokonor and in everything to do with Khara Khoto; he not only asked him to stay on in Kumbum, in order to extend their conversations, but even invited him to visit Lhasa – the ultimate dream of all explorers – and to make a series of journeys, using Lhasa as his base.

Kozlov confessed himself “delighted” by his meetings with the spiritual leader of Tibet.

On the 27th December the long awaited post from St. Petersburg finally reached expedition headquarters. Friends and colleagues from the Geographical Society all impressed upon Kozlov the enormous academic value of the Khara Khoto finds: their importance for an understanding of Tangut culture, about which little or nothing was previously known; the absolutely unique nature of the documents written in Tangut script; and how imperative it was that he return forthwith to the ‘Dead Town’. Kozlov was now offered the opportunity of altering the





further course of the expedition and, instead of conducting a geographical survey of Northwestern Sichuan, he could return to continue excavations.

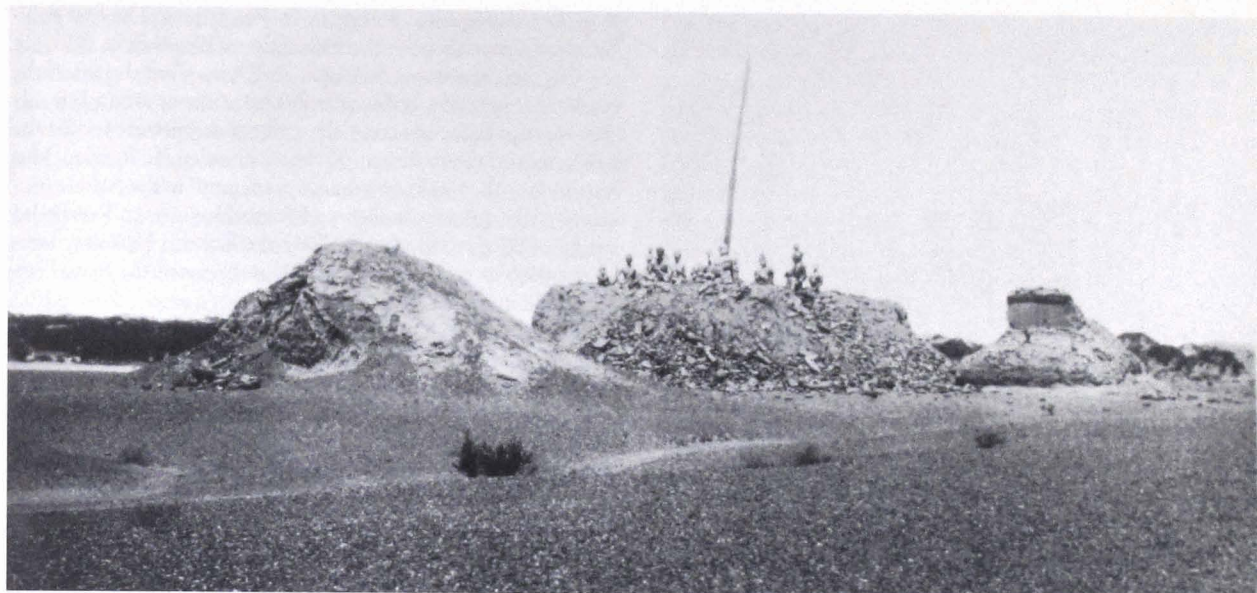
On the 22nd of May 1909, Kozlov and his companions found themselves once more in Khara Khoto. In the year they had been away nothing had been touched, not even the artefacts they had left behind them as unimportant. Having set up camp, they re-established friendly contact with the Torgut-beile, who helped them to hire diggers, and promised them daily supplies of food and water. Kozlov wrote: "Not just my companions, but even the local workers rapidly found themselves taken up with the excavations. We talked of nothing else: in the evening our conversation was of what we had found during the day, in the morning – of what we might find... Dust and sand, whipped up by the hot desert wind, drained the last drops of strength from our bodies... The excavations were carried out strictly according to a preconceived plan: the Mongol workers under the supervision of my Buryat companion explored the ruins of the houses (*fangzas*), while the Russian group searched the area immediately outside the town walls and at some distance from them."¹⁰

As in the previous year, there was no shortage of finds: agricultural implements, household goods, sherds of earthenware and porcelain, scraps of fabric, coins, banknotes – a real treasure hoard, which Kozlov himself curiously called "monotonous and modest," while continuing to complain about the exhausting effects of heat, dust and sand upon his men.

One spot did, however, cause real excitement. A temple surmounting the third tower from the west on the northern wall produced from beneath a layer of sand three lotus thrones – the remains of statues – and, lower down, some surviving fragments of wall paintings (Fig. 27).

Outside the city wall at a distance of three hundred metres from the northwest corner stood a *stūpa*, which was duly opened (Figs. 28-30). It yielded a truly prodigious treasure. The only matter for regret is that Kozlov's colleagues were so carried away and excited by what they were finding, that they failed to keep meticulous stratigraphic records, noting every separate step in the process of excavation, as would modern archaeologists. Kozlov describes manuscripts, books, scrolls, bronze and wooden statues, miniature *stūpas* – all jumbled together. "The value of what we found was enormously increased by their remarkable state of preservation, attributable to the extremely

29. *The excavated suburgan.*



30. *The excavated suburgan.*
Close up of the statues.



dry desert air... I shall never forget those blissful moments, as I shall equally never forget in particular the powerful impression made on myself and my companions by two Chinese icons on a muslin-like material. As we unrolled them, we were enthralled to see magnificent seated figures, bathed in a soft pale blue and pink radiance. From these sacred Buddhist relics there emanated something living, something expressive, something unalloyed; we simply could not take our eyes off them, so inimitably fine were they... Yet, did we but raise one edge of either canvas, a large segment of the paint lifted off, and instantly all the enchantment disappeared, wraith-like, leaving only a vague memory of the beauty that had been..." This lengthy extract from Kozlov's book¹¹ conveys well both the exhilaration of Kozlov's companions, and all their failings. What was this "muslin-like material?" Which were the "seated figures?" Which images in the collection is he talking about? Time and again Kozlov describes the disorderly jumble of articles in the *stūpa*. Near its base they discovered skeletal remains of the person buried there. The skull was taken to St. Petersburg and studied by the anthropologist F. Volkov, who had no difficulty in identifying it as that of a female of over fifty years of age. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to trace the skull and verify Volkov's findings. In the centre of the *stūpa* stood a wooden pole, around which were arranged, facing inwards, something in the order of twenty life-size clay statues "resembling lamas, conducting a religious ceremony in front of hundreds of manuscripts in Tangut script, stacked one upon the other."¹² Kozlov paints a strikingly vivid picture.

Eventually, the time came to pack up and prepare for the long journey home. Kozlov was convinced that he had discovered the capital of the former Tangut state. There was simply too much to carry, and the huge clay statues had to be left behind. Kozlov decided to conceal them carefully, then return for them on a subsequent visit. The next expedition was the 1923-1926 Mongolia-Tibet expedition.¹³ Kozlov returned himself to Khara Khoto in 1926, but the statues could not be found. There are two possible explanations: they could have been lost beneath the drifting sand, or destroyed by the local tribesmen. In a New Delhi museum there is a clay hand – much bigger than life-size – from a statue in the collection of Sir Mark Aurel Stein, who visited Khara Khoto in 1914.¹⁴

In autumn 1909 the whole collection of the Mongolia-Sichuan expedition was despatched to the new building of the Imperial

Russian Geographical Society in St. Petersburg. The first exhibition of materials from the expedition took place in 1910; for the first time the treasures of Khara Khoto were shown to the public (Figs. 31-33). Subsequently the works of art and the archaeological materials from the collection were moved to the Ethnographic Department of the Alexander III Russian Museum, while the books and manuscripts went to the Asiatic Museum of the Russian Academy of Sciences – now called the Institute of Oriental Studies. In 1933 the Russian Museum items were transferred to the Oriental Department of the State Hermitage Museum.

Kozlov himself was promoted to the rank of colonel, and invited to the Czar's summer palace at Tsarskoe Selo, where he presented an address on his journey and the discovery of Khara Khoto, illustrated with lantern slides and photographs, to Nicholas II and an invited audience. Further honours followed: actual and honorary membership of many Russian and foreign learned societies, the Gold Medal of the Royal Geographical Society of London, the Gold Medal of the Italian Geographical Society, and in 1913 the Chikhachev Prize of the French Academy of Sciences. Kozlov's major achievement lay in his comprehensive study of Central Asia, its peoples, its history, its natural phenomena. As a consequence, the contributions he made were extraordinarily diverse: the Botanical and Zoological Museums still keep items collected during his expeditions, while the Museum of Ethnography of the Russian Academy of Sciences takes particular pride in its Kozlov collections. The State Hermitage Museum and the Institute of Oriental Studies have the special privilege of holding the treasures of Khara Khoto, together with a fine collection of Tibetan and Chinese bronzes.

History of Khara Khoto

The lower reaches of the river Edzin-Gol in ancient and medieval times were a flowering oasis, with a broad network of canals irrigating the surrounding fields. The oasis was densely populated and prosperous, thanks to the merchant caravans which had to pass through on the direct route from China to the West. First records of the oasis are found in Chinese geographical works of the fifth to third centuries B.C. In the second and first centuries B.C. the area was fought over by the Chinese and the Huns; a fortress has been discovered fifteen kilometres north-east of Khara Khoto. In the seventh to eighth centuries A.D. the

oasis acquired renewed importance as China expanded her contacts with the West and a fortress, known as Tungheng, was built in what would later become the northeastern corner of the town of Khara Khoto. For a hundred years or so from the middle of the eighth century the territory around Edzin-Gol was under Tibetan control, before passing to the Uighur. Then, around 1035, the Tangut captured the oasis; it may well have been they who rebuilt and expanded the existing fort. It was now called by the Tanguts (in Chinese transcription) Edzina, and by the Chinese, Heishuicheng. Later the Mongols, translating the Chinese name 'Black' or 'Dead Town' into their own tongue, renamed it once more as Khara Khoto.¹⁰

It is worth noting that the chronology of the life of the oasis, drawn from written sources is substantiated by the dating of Kozlov's finds: his Khara Khoto collection contains a spade-shaped coin of the 5th-3rd centuries B.C., as well as some small bronze sculptures of the Northern Wei (386-535) and Sui (589-619) dynasties.

Most of the paintings in the collection date from the eleventh through thirteenth centuries, while the majority of the fragments of porcelain with cobalt decorative glazing are of the fourteenth century. No painting is of a later date than 1378-1387; no Chinese text – later than 1371; no Tangut text – later than 1212. So it seems that the life of the town ceased sometime around 1380. This is supported by the history of the Ming Dynasty: "In the fifth year of Hungu (1372) General Feng Sheng and his army reached Edzina. The town's defender, Buyan'temur, surrendered, and Chinese troops reached the mountains of Bojiashan. The ruler of Yuan,¹⁶ Gyardzhipan', fled. His minister... and 27 others were captured, together with ten or more thousand head of horses and cattle."¹⁷ The town's capture by the Chinese, the switching of trade routes from land to sea, and possibly, a change in climate followed by desertification, put an end to the town's existence towards the end of the fourteenth century.

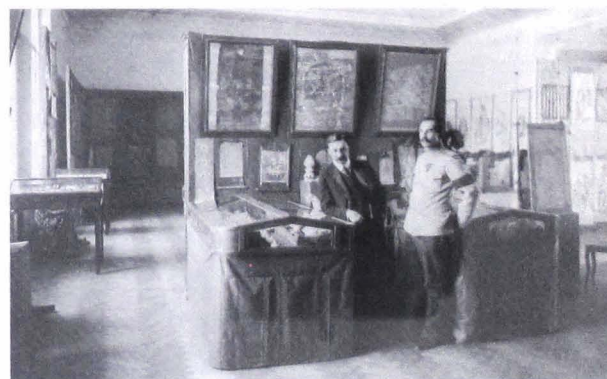
The Treasure of the "Illustrious" suburgan

As for the "Illustrious" *suburgan* itself,¹⁸ it is generally accepted that it was sealed in 1226-1227, shortly before the town fell to Genghis Khan. Since we cannot be certain exactly which of the dated texts came from there, and which from other sites, there is no way of precisely fixing the date. Kozlov tells us that in the

31. First exhibition at the Imperial Russian Geographic Society – 1910

32. Display of manuscripts at the 1910 Exhibition

33. Kozlov in the company of Dostoevsky, Secretary of the Imperial Russian Geographic Society, at the 1910 Exhibition



upper part of the tomb articles were jumbled together, while only at the bottom level some of the books were wrapped in cloth and neatly stacked. The disorder gave reason to suppose that after the burial of some member of the priesthood, further items were added to those originally in the tomb. While such a possibility cannot be excluded, given that the town was faced with imminent enemy assault, it is difficult to accept it without question. The sheer quantity, quality and diversity of the books and scrolls in the tomb point to the treasure's having belonged either to some person of high station, or to a wealthy monastery. We have no clues as to who precisely was buried there.

Professor E.I. Kychanov's study of the Tangut texts from Khara Khoto, and Professor L.N. Menshikov's study of the Chinese texts, show that many of the works in the collection were commissioned by the imperial family; several works are in multiple copies. As Professor Menshikov writes "certain items are printed on yellow paper, which is usually the mark of a private copy from the Imperial library."¹ In addition, we know that the Tangut emperor Ren-zong and his wife, the Empress Lo, personally commissioned or funded many publications. On the basis of these two pieces of evidence L.N. Menshikov suggests that in the "Illustrious" *suburgan* was buried "a member of the ruling family together with his personal library." Two other factors lend support to Menshikov's theory: the 'metropolitan' standard of craftsmanship displayed by the creators of some of the paintings in the collection – both 'Chinese' and 'Tibetan'; and the depiction of donors of high social station, as well as, supposedly, of Tangut emperors. Professor Menshikov, however, goes further by suggesting that the actual owner of the treasure, and the body buried in the tomb, was none other than the Empress Lo. The skull discovered there was, after all, that of a woman. The emperor Ren-zong died in 1193, leaving the Empress Lo a widow, and his son, Chun-you, as his successor. The Empress Lo was Chinese born.² Ren-zong's nephew, An-quan, profiting from the turmoil produced by the threat of the Mongol invasion, overthrew Chun-you, with the support of the Empress Lo. She promptly dispatched an embassy to the Jürchen Jin empire to seek their endorsement of An-quan's claim to the title of emperor, which was duly granted. The records make no further mention of the Empress Lo. Professor Menshikov's hypothesis is that An-quan debarred her from affairs of state, that she took holy orders and retreated to Khara Khoto, where she eventually died and was buried in the "Illustrious" *suburgan*.

Professor Menshikov admits the lack of any direct evidence for this theory. For that reason it falls short of being acceptable. However, it represents the only attempt thus far to identify the body in the tomb.

The Hermitage collection contains in all 3,500 items from Khara Khoto. Of these, some two hundred are paintings on silk, canvas, paper, and wood, or wall paintings. More than half are complete, the remainder are fragments. There are twenty xylographs and drawings, mostly xylographs which are in the collection of the Institute of Oriental Studies, together with the texts they illustrate. Kozlov brought back seventy sculptures of clay, wood and bronze, in addition to textiles, paper banknotes and coins. A further 3,000 items comprise fragments of local pottery and porcelain of the Yuan dynasty (1280-1367), household utensils and other articles of everyday use, made of bronze, iron and wood. The Tangut collection of the Institute of Oriental Studies includes some 8,000 items.

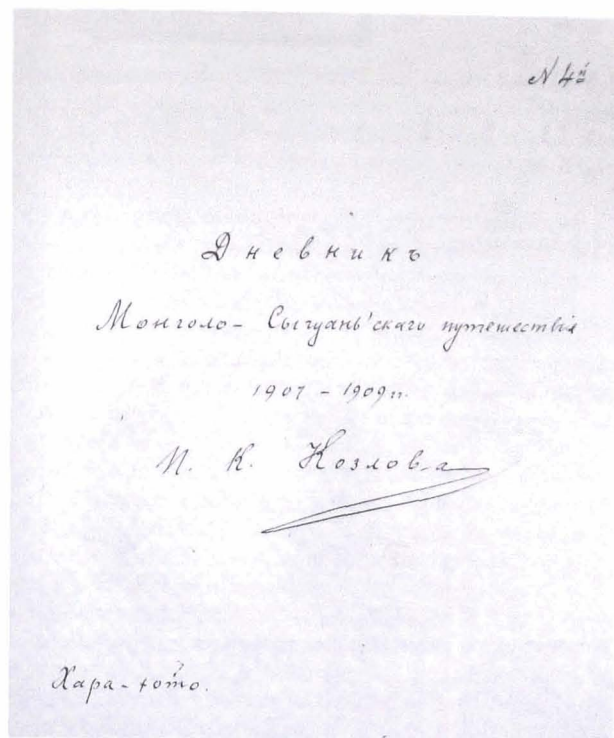
Kozlov's discovery caused a sensation in the academic world, and was largely responsible for the development of a new branch of oriental studies, Tangutology. The major part of the research into the history of the Tangut, their language, including the deciphering of Tangut script, their culture and their art has been carried out thus far by Russian scholars. The pioneer in this new field was the outstanding scholar N. A. Nevsky.³ It was S.F. Oldenburg who first described the 'Tibetan style' works of art from Khara Khoto.⁴ E.I. Lubo-Lesnichenko has studied archaeological remains from Khara Khoto, that is the pottery, utensils, household goods and textiles.

The Hermitage's Khara Khoto collection offers insights into medieval Chinese, Tibetan and Central Asian art, and into the question of how such short-lived cultures as that of the Tangut arise, take shape and struggle to establish a unique and independent identity. The collection itself is remarkable and important, not only because there are few others like it in a comparable state of preservation, but because it opens whole new fields of study in iconography, style, and cultural history.

¹P.K. Kozlov, 1923.

²The medal was named after the Grand Duke Constantine, President of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

³The Gregorian calendar was introduced into Russia on February 14, 1918 to replace the Julian calendar of Peter the Great. Both systems were used in Russia until the reform of the calendar in 1918. The Gregorian calendar is an increase of thirteen days in comparison to the Julian.



³⁴After the so-called Battle of Guru, British troops entered Lhasa in August 1904. The Dalai Lama fled the Holy City to Urga.

³⁵G.A. Leonov, 1991.

³⁶P. K. Kozlov, *op. cit.*, p. 550.

As E.I. Lubo-Lesnichenko rightly remarked in her popular booklet *The Dead Town of Khara Khoto*, the slight displacement of the gates to the north and east of the town's central axis, together with the towers surmounted by *stupas*, clearly marks Khara Khoto as a Tangut, rather than Chinese, settlement.

³⁷Kozlov's first find was the portrait of a monk, a fragment of an icon, presumably cut from the original canvas sometime in the 12th-13th centuries. On the back of the portrait are the remains of an inscription, which unfortunately cannot be read. Oldenburg suggested that the portrait bore some resemblance to twelfth-century Bengal miniatures. A.I. Ivanov, *Tangut manuscripts from Khara Khoto*; S.F. Oldenburg, *A Buddhist icon, brought from the ruins of Khara Khoto*; V.L. Kotvich, *Samples of banknotes of the Chinese Yuan dynasty*. In: *Proceedings of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society*, 1909.

³⁸P. K. Kozlov, *op. cit.*, p. 550.

³⁹P. K. Kozlov, *op. cit.*, p. 556.

⁴⁰No expeditions were sent between 1909 and 1923 due to the First World War and the Russian Revolution.

⁴¹Sir Mark Aurel Stein, *Innermost Asia*, 4 vols. Oxford, 1928, pl. LIV.

⁴²E.I. Lubo-Lesnichenko and I.N. Shafranovskaya, 1968, p. 10.

⁴³I.e. ruler of the short-lived Northern Yuan dynasty (1368-1387), whose capital was Khara Khoto. See: L.N. Menshikov, 1984, p. 42.

⁴⁴*Mingshi*, Shanghai, 1935, p.24. Quoted in: E.I. Lubo-Lesnichenko and I.N. Shafranovskaya, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

⁴⁵"Illustrious" *suburgan* (*tsuburgan*; Mongolian for *stüpa*). The *stüpa* in which the Khara Khoto treasures were found was given this epithet by Kozlov.

⁴⁶L.N. Menshikov, unpublished article: *Kirzhnaya grafičeskaja knižnitsa iz Khara Khoto* (Book engravings in the Chinese works from Khara Khoto).

⁴⁷E.I. Kychanov, *Očerki* (Sketches), p. 252.

⁴⁸N.A. Nevsky perished in a Stalinist prison camp in 1937. His studies of the Tangut were published in 1960 in: *Tangutskaya Filologiya*, vols. I-II. In 1962 he was posthumously awarded a Lenin Prize for this work.

⁴⁹S.F. Oldenburg, 1914. This book has long become a bibliographical rarity and constitutes the only publication thus far on the Tibetan paintings in the collection.

⁵⁰For a bibliography of Tangutology, see: E.I. Kychanov, Moscow, 1960, pp. 136-143. See also the bibliographical appendix to this catalogue.

THE TANGUT EMPIRE 982-1227



M O N G O L I A

4 1193-1206 AD
Genghis Khan invades
the Mongolian steppes

MONGOLIAN (ULAN BATOR) TARTAR

GOBI DESERT

5 1205 AD
Genghis Khan
leads border attacks
1209 AD
Siege of Yinchuan
and Treaty
1217 AD
Mongol invasion

6 1226 AD
Mongol invasion and
Khara Khoto falls
1227 AD
Death of Genghis Khan
and Fall of Yinchuan

KHITAN LIAO

N. SONG: 960-1127 AD

2 1042 & 1049 AD
Khitan invasions

YAN
(BEIJING)

JURCHEN

JIN: 1115-1234 AD

1 1040-1044 AD
Chinese-Tangut war

CHINESE

S. SONG: 1127-1279 AD

3 1081 & 1096 AD
Chinese invasions



The height of the
Tangut Empire 1039 AD
Earliest Tangut settlements
6th & 7th Century

The State of Great Xia (982-1227 A.D.)

Evgeny Ivanovich Kychanov

Origin of the Tangut People

Khara Khoto, the 'Black' or 'Dead Town' or 'the town on the Black River' – Edzina, lay on the northern border of the Tangut state. The Tangut themselves called it 'The Great State of Xia (of [the descendants of those who came down from] the White Heights)'.

All Tangut settlements in the twelfth century were allotted to one of five categories: Khara Khoto was of the fourth.

The language of the Tangut indicates that they were of Tibetan-Burmese origin. Though they called themselves the 'Mi' or 'Minia' whereas the Chinese knew them as the 'Dangxiang' and the Tibetans called them 'Miñag'.

The ancient Turkish and subsequently Mongolian name for this people – Tangut – was conventionally adopted in Europe. They were direct descendants of the 'Qiang', a people as ancient as the Chinese, and recognised as having inhabited the northwestern and western regions of what is now China as early as the third millennium B.C. The present-day descendants of the Qiang are held to be the Tibetans, Burmans and other peoples speaking Tibetan-Burmese dialects now living in the border area between China and Tibet.

In the sixth and seventh centuries A.D. the Tangut inhabited northwest Sichuan, in an area around the present town of Songpan. Tibetan advances to the east and northeast in the seventh century drove the Tangut – together with their allies, the Xianbi (the Tuguhun) – northwards into the southern part of what is now the Ordos desert in Southwest Inner Mongolia. Here the Tangut settled and prospered, dominating a region inhabited also by Chinese, Tibetans, Uighurs, Tuguhun and Tatars.

In the second half of the ninth century, following the collapse of the Tibetan state and a popular uprising in China, the Chinese emperor, rewarded the Tangut chieftain Toba Si-gong for his help in suppressing the revolt. He was appointed governor-general of the area and endowed with the title of *wang* (prince) of Xia. According to Chinese tradition, the lands settled by the Tangut were the location of the original Chinese state of Xia – which, around the end of the fourth century, was known as Da Xia or Great Xia, and ruled by Helianbobo, a descendant of the Huns.

The collapse of the Tang dynasty in 907 A.D. and the disintegration of China into a series of independent states during the

period of the Five Dynasties, together with the emergence on China's northern border of the Khitan state of Khitan Liao further enhanced the emerging independence of the Tangut.

The Foundation of Xi Xia

With the foundation of the Song dynasty in 960 A.D. and the gradual reunification of China under its rule, the Tangut determined to fight for their own independence. In 982 the Tangut leader Toba Ji-qian openly challenged the Chinese court, and in the following year formed his own administration. He was supported by the Khitan who recognised him as governor-general of the area, six years later gave him a Khitan princess as a wife, and conferred on him the title of *wang* of the State of Xia. By 997 Ji-qian had captured the whole of the southern Ordos from the Chinese; in 1002 he took the town of Lingzhou (now Lingwu in the Ning-xia-hui Autonomous Region) and declared it his capital.

Chinese sources suggest that the new Tangut state adopted the name of Xia, whereas the Chinese themselves recorded it as Xi Xia or Western Xia from 1001. It should be stressed that this was a purely Chinese name, not to be found in original Tangut writings. Possibly the Chinese gave it this name even during the rule of Ji-qian. The name Xi (west) Xia ('White High') is worth considering briefly the polysemantic concept of 'white high'. The concepts 'white' and 'high' – as opposed to 'low' – were associated with the west. 'White high' could, therefore, in specific contexts be interpreted as western. In that case, 'Xia' would have been the direct equivalent of the Chinese name, Xi Xia. The Chinese may have been unaware of the hidden meaning of the Tangut ... of the word Xia 'White High'.

Ji-qian established the Tangut ruling dynasty, which Chinese sources refer to as Toba or Li, a name borrowed from the rulers of the Xianbi. The true name of the dynasty, however, and the only one encountered in Tangut documents, was Ngwemi (the Chinese version: *Weiming*). The Chinese conferred the name Li – an official – on Tangut rulers; whereas, the Tangut rulers themselves assumed the official family name of the Song emperors – Zhao.

Ji-qian perished in battle against the Tibetans in 1004. The northeastern Tibetans from Amdo, together with the Uighurs from Ganzhou and Shazhou (now Dunhuang) in western Gansu, the growing power of the Tangut were depriving them of ac-

cess to Chinese markets and threatening their independence. For the first fifty years of its existence, therefore, the new Tangut state found itself engaged in frequent wars with its Tibetan and Uighur neighbours.

Ji-qian was succeeded by his son De-ming, who as a means of self-aggrandizement posthumously conferred the title of emperor upon his father. Modern scholars differ on precisely when the Tangut state came into existence. Chinese scholars accept 1038, the year when the third Tangut emperor, Yuan-hao, adopted that title in open defiance of China. Some prefer 1032, the year Yuan-hao came to power. Others quite unfoundedly suggest 1004, the year of De-ming's succession. The present writer's preference is for 982, when Ji-qian openly embarked upon the creation of an independent Tangut state.

In support one might mention the general acceptance by historians that Ji-qian was the 'Great Ancestor', the founder of the Tangut ruling dynasty.

A Brief Political History of the Tangut Empire

Let us now take a brief look at the political history of the Tangut state over the course of its 245 year existence. In 1006 De-ming concluded a peace treaty with China, a fact which alone underlines the Song dynasty's acceptance of Tangut independence. The Chinese conferred on De-ming the post of governor-general (*jiedushi*) of the army of Dingnan and the title of Prince and Pacifier of the Land in the West (Xiping wang), the name by which from the middle of the ninth century the Chinese conventionally referred to as Tangut territory. His army retained all the territory under control. He reformed his administration and legal system, and introduced a court ceremonial on a par with that of the Song court. In 1028 De-ming officially named his son heir to the imperial throne (*taizi*), and his mother Empress (*Huanghou*). This can only confirm that within his own domain he saw himself, and was seen, as emperor. In 1020 De-ming transferred the imperial capital to the town of Huaiyuan, and renamed it Xingzhou (modern Yinchuan in the Ningxia- hui Autonomous Republic). Peace with China left him free to concentrate on efforts against the Tibetans and Uighurs. After some early failures in his campaigns against the latter, De-ming succeeded in 1028 in capturing the province of Liangzhou.

De-ming died at the end of 1031 and was succeeded by his appointed heir, Yuan-hao. Yuan-hao inherited a prosperous state,

its strength unscathed by wars. He applied himself vigorously to furthering its interests. Official recognition of the Tangut state and its emperor by both the Chinese Song and the Khitan Liao dynasties made him one of the three emperors in the land now known as continental China. The status of Yuan-hao is beyond dispute; contemporary writers and modern-day Chinese historians alike compare the China of that period to a cauldron with three feet (*ding*) – Song, Liao and Xia. Yuan-hao had introduced a series of reforms: he modified his administration along Chinese lines, reorganised the army, in 1036 initiated the use of Tangut script, and at court introduced Tangut ceremonies and music. Buddhism under the reign of Yuan-hao was adopted as the official religion. As a mark of independence he devised his own imperial emblems; and on the tenth day of the eleventh month 1038 – claiming that he had been so requested by his neighbours, the Uighurs, Tibetans and Tatars – he solemnly adopted the title of Emperor (*Huangdi*). By this time he had ultimately crushed the Uighurs of Ganzhou, and had annexed the districts of Suzhou, Guazhou and Shazhou – the whole western part of the modern province of Gansu, including Dunhuang. It was at this time, it would appear, that the town of Khara Khoto at the mouth of the river Heishui (now the Edzin-Gol) was absorbed into the Tangut state.

In 1039 a Tangut embassy carried a letter to the Song capital, Kaifeng, proposing that China should officially recognise Yuan-hao's claim to the title of emperor. In the letter, Yuan-hao wrote, *inter alia*: "My forefathers came of imperial stock. When eastern Jin dynasty (317-420 A.D.) fell into decline, it was they who founded the dynasty of Hou Wei (386-534 A.D.). My forefather Toba Si-gong gave military assistance to the Tang dynasty in its last years, for which he was given a title and honoured with the right to bear the name of the Tang emperors. My grandfather, Toba Ji-qian, ... on Heaven's mandate raised aloft the banner of justice and conquered all other nations. My father ... was concerned only to extend the modest domain inherited from his ancestors. I contrived unexpectedly to create from intricate patterns a means of writing our Tangut language, and have changed the mode of dress and the headwear of the Great Hans. As soon as this new clothing, writing, ceremonial and music was introduced, and the ritual vessels prepared for use, then immediately the Tibetans, the Tatars, the Zhangye (the Ganzhou Uighurs) and the Jiaohe (the Turfan Uighurs) all deferred to me. They did not like me to be called prince (*wang*),

and willingly deferred to me when I took the title of emperor. On several occasions they came together to demand that my title should befit my station. And I expressed the wish that an empire should be created in these outlying lands... On the tenth day of the eleventh month (1038) an altar was erected outside the city, the proper rituals performed, and I duly adopted the title of Founder of the Dynasty, Inventor of Writing, General, Originator of Laws and Ceremonies, the Emperor who loves men and honours his ancestors. And my kingdom is called Great Xia, and the device of my rule is – May the ceremonies and laws bestowed by Heaven endure for ever. [It was traditional for a bombastic and flowery title (or ‘device’) to be given to each part, or the whole, of the period of an emperor’s rule.] I humbly await, your Majesty, your consent that in the lands beyond the western border of your domain I be considered lord, with my face turned towards the south [i.e. emperor].”

The Chinese court not only refused to recognise Yuan-hao as emperor; they declared him a rebel. The result was a four year war (1040-1044) between the Chinese and Tangut, the first half of which was a bloody affair, costing thousands of lives. From 1042 both warring sides, recognising that outright victory was beyond them, restricted themselves to skirmishes, accompanied by protracted peace talks. In the course of these conferences, the following terms slowly took shape: Yuan-hao would refrain from styling himself emperor in his relations with the Song court, in compensation for which the Song court would pay annually to the Tangut a tribute of 255,000 items. These items would include: 152,000 bolts of silk, 72,000 taels (*liang*) of silver and 30,000 *jin* of tea (1 *jin* 600 grams), and 1000 bolts of cloth. In 1044 a peace was agreed on these terms, with the boundary between the two states remaining unchanged. All in all, Yuan-hao had gained tribute, but lost prestige. In the diplomatic parlance of the time, he had accepted the status of Inferior (*chen*), or, as it is often translated, Vassal. In diplomatic correspondence the Chinese referred to him not as emperor (*huangdi*) as they did with the emperor of Liao, but only as Lord or Ruler (*zhu*). As a symbol of his investiture – his right to possess and to rule – Yuan-hao received from the Song emperor a silver-gilt seal with the wording: “the seal of the ruler of the state of Xia”. From the middle of the eleventh to the middle of the twelfth century, in conformity with diplomatic practice at the time, relationships between the emperors of China, Liao and Xia were defined also in terms of family; the whole sub-

celestial world was, after all, seen as one family. Thus the Song emperor was held to be the elder brother of the emperor of Liao and father of the emperor of Xia. The emperor of Liao was the younger brother of the Song emperor and uncle of the emperor of Xia. The emperor of Xia was the son of the Song emperor and nephew of the emperor of Liao.

Be that as it may, within the great Tangut state itself, Yuan-hao and all his descendants enjoyed the title of emperor. The state of Great Xia remained to all intents and purposes fully independent and the emperor of Xia owed no obedience to the emperors of Song or Liao. As for other powerful rivals of the Tangut, there were none. It is known that at official audiences the Song emperor received first the embassy of Liao, then of Xia, then of Korea, and then of Vietnam.

The peace treaty between Song and Xia was made more urgent by a Khitan attack on the latter. In 1042 the Khitan had exploited the hostilities between the two states by threatening to invade China and consequently exacting more tribute from the Chinese already enjoyed under a 1005 treaty. Peace negotiations between Song and Xia were not at all to their liking. Minor insurrections by disgruntled Tangut living just over the border in Liao gave its emperor the excuses needed to lead his army into Xia. It is, of course, possible that the rebellion of the Tanguts living in Liao happened with the connivance of the Tangut court, for they in turn were ill pleased by the fact that the Khitan had not only failed to offer them support in their fight with the Chinese, but had even contrived to turn the situation to their own account. The Chinese, fearing the Khitan much more than the Tangut, gave support to Xia. The Tangut routed the Khitan, then offered them peace, with no conditions apart from an exchange of prisoners.

Yuan-hao lived the last three years of his life partly in isolation in a palace he had built not far from his capital in the foothills of the Helanshan range. He remained partly engaged with problems of state, improving the economy and foreign trade, particularly with China. In the first days of 1048 he perished at the hands of his own son and heir. Chinese contemporaries attributed the crime to jealousy; Yuan-hao had stolen a woman betrothed to his son and taken her as a wife.

With the death of Yuan-hao, there began a lengthy period in the history of the Tangut state during which the nonage of the emperors caused power to fall into the hands of their mothers acting as empress-regents. Three emperors, Liang-zuo (1048-

1067), Bing-chang (1067-1086) and Qian-shun (1086-1139), did not exercise power during the first fifteen years of their reign, but were entirely dependent upon their mothers and relatives from the Liang clan. This distancing from power of the ruling Ngwemi gave rise to civil unrest. Song and Liao were not slow to exploit the weakening central power in Xia; Khitan Liao sought to resolve its differences with the Tanguts in battle, and China's aim was nothing less than the destruction of the Tangut state.

Still smarting from their recent defeat, the Khitan invaded Tangut territory again in 1049. Despite penetrating as far as the capital, they were unable to achieve military victory over the Tangut. Peace talks dragged on until 1053, when the Tangut ultimately compensated their enemy with cattle and cattle by-products for their losses during the campaign. No territorial concessions were made.

Apart from endless border skirmishes, two major wars were fought between the Tangut Empire and China in the second half of the eleventh century (1081-1086, and 1096-1099). In the first the Tangut lost Lanzhou, now the biggest city in Gansu province, but no formal peace treaty was agreed upon. The second war likewise brought no clear victory to either side. In the year 1100, peace was concluded on the basis of the previous 1044 treaty. The Tangut conceded Lanzhou, as well as the town of Suizhou, now Suide in Shaanxi province, and several border fortresses. In 1100 the sixteen year old emperor Qian-shun re-established individual rule, and the Tangut state once again began to gather strength.

The first quarter of the twelfth century brought major changes to Eastern Asia. In 1125 the Khitan state of Liao was overrun by the Jürchen, who founded their Jin dynasty (1115-1234) in what had been Liao and the northernmost part of China. The Tangut initially supported the Khitan against the Jürchen. However, faced with the collapse of Liao and a series of unprecedented defeats inflicted by the Jürchen on the Chinese Song, the Tangut had no choice but to make overtures to their powerful new neighbours. They, for their part, were prepared to buy Tangut neutrality by conceding to the Jürchen the northern areas of what is now Qinghai province, including the towns of Qining, now the provincial capital and Lezhou, now Ledu.

In 1139 the son of Qian-shun, Ren-xiao, succeeded to the imperial throne. His mother was Chinese, and with him began the sinicisation of the Ngwemi dynasty. His reign (1139-1193) was

marred by two internal uprisings. The first was a revolt by Khitan refugees from Liao, and was, curiously, accompanied by a violent earthquake. The second, which took place in 1169-1170, was instigated by Ren De-jin, a dignitary of Chinese birth whose ambition was to split the Tangut empire. Born in the Chinese city of Xian, he had become a kinsman of the Ngwemi by marrying his daughter to the previous emperor Qian-shun. By 1150 Ren De-jin was overall head of the civil administration of the Tangut state, and in 1156 was appointed Chancellor (*guoxiang*). Having established his power base in Lingzhou, he enlisted the support of the Southern Song via the province of Sichuan, then declared his independence as ruler of the new state of Chu. The internal causes of these events remain a mystery. Ren De-jin found no support, however, in the Jin dynasty which had replaced the Northern Song in 1127. In conversation with the Tangut ambassador, the Jin emperor demanded, in effect, the execution of Ren De-jin. Whether this support was decisive remains unclear; in any case, sometime in the autumn of 1170 Ren De-jin was accused of high treason and put to death.

The remaining fifty odd years of Ren-xiao's reign turned out to be a golden period for the Tangut state in terms of politics and religion. Following the execution of Ren De-jin a new legal code was introduced, consisting of 20 chapters and 1456 articles. The major part of this document is extant. During the second half of the twelfth century Buddhism flourished in Xia and in the Tangut culture.

Shortly before the death of Ren-xiao, the long peaceful relationship between the Tangut Empire and the Jürchen Empire of Jin was shattered by an outbreak of hostilities. Ren-xiao's heir, Chun-you (1193-1206) was, by blood, more Chinese than Tangut. His mother the Empress Lo, who is mentioned in several Tangut documents from the Khara Khoto treasure, was Chinese. The period of Chun-you's reign saw the final victory of Genghis Khan over his rivals in the Mongolian steppe.

Not only were the Tangut well aware of these events taking place beyond their northern borders. They found themselves in some measure involved and, what is more, not on the winning side. The Tangut referred to the people of the Mongolian steppe as Tatars. It was against the Tangut state, as early as 1205, that Genghis Khan as Khan of All the Mongols declared his first transfrontier campaign.

The Mongols pillaged the western provinces of Xia and triggered a palace revolution in the Tangut capital. With the con-

nivance of his mother, the empress Lou Chun-you was overthrown by his cousin An-quan (1206-1211), allegedly for failing adequately to defend the country. Shortly thereafter, Chun-you died.

In 1209 Genghis Khan invaded the Tangut Empire for the second time, now laying siege to the capital. The Tangut sought help from the Jürchen who refused, unwisely as it turned out. For three years later, at the instigation of the Mongols, an eleven year war broke out between the Tangut and the Jürchen, which proved fatal for both sides. Although the Mongols failed to take the Tangut capital, the Tangut emperor gave one of his daughters, Chahe, to be Genghis Khan's third wife, and acknowledged himself to be vassal (*chen*) of the Mongol Khan as part of the 1209 peace treaty. 1211 brought the abdication and death of An-quan.

The court circle which had brought about An-quan's abdication saw to it that he was succeeded not by his son, but by the son of one of the grand princes of the Ngwemi. The new Emperor, Zun, (1211- 1223) was a man already in his fifties, but well educated and with an academic degree. In 1217 the Mongol armies returned and once more laid siege to the capital, though again the Tangut defenses held out. The Mongols made only one demand as the price for peace; that the Tangut should join them in their campaign in the West against the Khwārezm Shah of Northern Iran. Genghis Khan had by this time already subdued the Uighurs and the Karluk-Turks. In Semirech'e the Karakithan empire of Western Liao had also fallen. The Jürchen empire of Jin, quite apart from its conflict with the Tangut, had also been at war with the Mongols since 1211, and was suffering a series of massive defeats. Northern China had been reduced to a wasteland, which the Mongols intended to turn into pasture for their animals. This was the situation when the Tangut decided to refuse the Mongols' request for help. Genghis Khan thereupon swore to annihilate the Tangut "to the very last slave." While Genghis Khan was pursuing his campaign in the West, a majority at the Tangut court supported making peace with the Jürchen empire of Jin. In 1223 they forced the abdication of Zun in favour of his son De-wang (1223-1226); and in 1224 they made peace with Jin. There is some evidence to indicate that the Tangut began to look for allies against Genghis Khan in Mongolia itself. Hearing this, Khan returned from the West, and in 1225 a Mongol embassy to Xia demanded that De-wang hand his son over to them as a hostage. The Tangut refused. In the

spring of the following year the Mongol army, under the personal leadership of Genghis Khan, appeared on the northern border of their state. One of the first towns to fall was Khara Khoto. The war was still in progress when, in 1226, De-wang died. He was replaced by one of the grand princes, referred to as Nanping wang shi. On 18 August 1227 Genghis Khan died. We cannot be certain whether his death occurred before or after the fall of the Tangut capital; but Genghis Khan's vow to destroy Great Xia, together with the fact that he died on Tangut soil, undoubtedly accounts for the ferocity with which the Tangut population was put to the slaughter. Some time later in the century a Tangut province was formed as part of the territory of the Mongol state. At the end of the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth centuries, on the initiative of the Mongol prince Ananda, who was at that time ruler of the Tangut, the province was forcibly converted to Islam. Under the Chinese Ming and Qing dynasties, part of the original Tangut territory became the province of Ningxia ('Pacified Xia'). This is now the Ningxia-hui Autonomous Region of the Chinese People's Republic, a considerable proportion of whose population are Chinese-speaking Muslims.

The 'People of the White Heights'

It has already been mentioned that the official name of the Tangut state meant, literally, 'the White High Great State of Xia'. The interpretation of the words 'white high' presents difficulties, and has been the subject of considerable debate. The repeated occurrence in Tangut texts of such phrases as "people of the White High" or "nine brothers of the White High" suggests that the term may allude to the origins of the ruling Ngwemi clan or of the Tangut people as a whole, i.e. to the fact that they came originally from the White Heights, from the ice-covered mountain peaks, source of all the great rivers of Asia. This tradition certainly existed in Tibet. The great Tibetan poet Milārepa figuratively defined his own birthplace as a glacier. Furthermore, this interpretation would accord nicely with a traditional cult of the mountains, common to Tangut and Tibetan alike – a tradition which distinguished between the lower Black Mountains, bare of snow and ice, and the White Heights with their snowy peaks. According to Tangut mythology, in the beginning there was emptiness, in which of its own accord was born the rock (mountain) Kulong. The rock began to grow and separat-

ed Earth from Heaven. Tangut texts frequently refer to the Tangut as black-haired and ruddy-faced – descriptions which have also attracted considerable academic attention. It is hard to see any better explanation of them at present than that they refer to two original Tangut clans: the paternal black-haired clan, who sprang originally from Heaven, and the maternal ruddy-faced clan, who sprang from Earth.

Tangut Society

In its heyday the Tangut state occupied the land within the great curve of the Huanghe (Yellow River) and the major part of the former province of Gansu between the Gobi desert and the mountains of Nanshan as well as to the west of the mountains of Helanshan. In the geography of modern China, this represents western Gansu province, Western Inner Mongolia, the whole of the Ningxia-hui Autonomous Republic, some western areas of Shaanxi province, and the northern part of Qinghai province. Khara Khoto is in the village unit (*aimak*) of Edzina in western Inner Mongolia.

The economy of Tangut was based on agriculture and animal husbandry. The Tangut raised millet, wheat, buckwheat, rice, hemp and cotton. Fields were watered by a wide network of irrigation channels – those around the town of Yinchuan, still impress one by their sheer scale, and the fertility of the land they serve. Animal husbandry, an economic mainstay of the Tangut from time immemorial, flourished in Alashan and other upland regions. The Tangut raised horses, camels, cattle, goats and sheep. The abundance of domestic animals in Xia was remarked upon by many contemporary writers and Tangut horses were held to be “the best in the sub-celestial sphere.” Xia was noted also for the highly refined salt extracted from lakes in the Ordos, and for rhubarb, which Marco Polo wrote about some time later. The Tangut were also skilled in iron work and ceramics, and produced their own coinage.

The administrative system was, broadly speaking, based on the Chinese. Overall civil administration was run by a State Secretariat (*Zhongshu*), military administration by a Privy Council (*Shumi*), while a Censorate (*Yushitai*) maintained overall surveillance of the official and administrative system. Separate directorates oversaw various branches of the economy and government.

Undoubtedly the fact remains that the Tangut state, like those

of Liao and Jin, was based on slave-ownership. According to law, all citizens were either freemen or slaves – men slaves (*phinga*) and women slaves (*nini*). As in China free citizens were categorised as either commoners or functionaries (those who held rank), while monks, both Taoist and Buddhist, enjoyed a special social status.

The Tangut wore tight shirts, with loose-fitting gowns which in ordinary workaday life did not reach the knees, trousers, broad-legged boots or soft shoes and puttees. Functionaries' gowns were purple, while those of military officers were purple and patterned. Functionaries' headbands and hats varied according to rank. Gowns were tied at the waist with a belt; in the case of the military at least, the number of ornamental plates on the belt and the metal (gold, silver, copper etc.) from which they were made acted as marks of rank. Commoners, and those who held no position in the civil service, for the most part wore black gowns, while those who held no post, but were nonetheless of the nobility, wore green. Other indicators of rank were the style, size and splendour of one's residence, one's conveyance, the opulence of family weddings and funerals, etc. From the beginning of Yuan-hao's reign, all Tangut men wore their hair in the *tufa* style, borrowed from the Khitan: the top and back of the head were shaved, with a fringe over the forehead and two plaits over the temples.

All healthy adult males were liable to taxation and to registration for military service. Of every four men registered, two were conscripted – one into the regular army, one into the auxiliaries. The army's spearhead was its cavalry; the cavalry elite were the ‘iron hawk’ detachments, modelled on units in the Khitan army. Apart from scale armour and hand weapons, the army was equipped with devices for the defence and storming of towns, catapults included a light type which was mounted on the back of a camel. The court and the emperor himself were protected by guard units awaiting orders, who fulfilled a variety of other duties as well. Border guards patrolled the boundaries of the state. The whole country was connected by an intricate network of post-stations. Imperial orders and other important messages were conveyed and executed by couriers and officials, who carried as credentials special batons (*paizi*) made of anything from copper to gold.

The population of Xia was multiracial, consisting of Tangut, Chinese, Tibetans and Uighurs. All citizens enjoyed equal rights under Tangut law, regardless of their ethnic origins. There was

one exception however: where two people of equal rank or social status, were found, but only one of Tangut origin, the Tangut was held to have seniority.

Buddhism in the Tangut Empire

As with many Central Asian peoples, the Tangut, before they adopted Buddhism, were worshippers of Tengri – Heaven or the Heavenly Spirit. Their religious practices were closely related to the magical Tibetan Bon beliefs and shamanistic in nature, and many survived the adoption of Buddhism. The Tangut shamans, known as *si*, performed animal sacrifice and served all ranks of society, from the court to the common people. In many ways the *si* fulfilled the function of witch doctors.

Buddhism was unquestionably known among the Tangut as early as the ninth to tenth centuries. It was only from 1038, when the emperor Yuan-hao set up a special commission to translate the Buddhist canon into Tangut, that it spread sufficiently to become in effect the official state religion. This occurred only two years after the introduction of Tangut script, devised largely by Yeli Ren-yong. The native script, based on the Chinese, used both ideograms and phonograms. Words were monosyllabic, and the ideograms were subtle modifications of the Chinese, perhaps influenced by Khitan writing. This script, comprising of some 6500 symbols, reflected the nature of the Tangut language, which, like Chinese, had significant tonality and was rich in homonyms.

Two men were appointed to head the imperial commission set up to translate Buddhist writ, preceptor Bai Fa Xin and the official (or possibly monk-official) Zhi Guang. A surviving Tangut text describes the event: “The emperor... of the state of Xia, having commenced the process of renewing laws and rituals in the year marked by the signs of earth and tiger 1038 did order the state preceptor Bai Fa Xin and ... the official Zhi Guang, in charge of a body of thirty two men, to effect translations into the language of the Tangut. By the first year of the sign of Tranquility, the gift of Heaven 1098, in the course of 53 years, 3579 *juans* have been translated from the *Greater (Mahāyāna)* and *Lesser (Hīnayāna)* *Tripitaka*.” This great translation project was begun at a time when only one Chinese edition of the Buddhist canon existed, a xylograph known as *The Canon under the Sign of the Rule of Kai-bao* (971-983). It is clear that prior to the ‘age of translations’ Buddhist texts circulated within the Tangut

state in Chinese and Tibetan versions, possibly together with versions in Uighur, Sanskrit or some other Indian language. The Tangut texts, however, were most probably based on the canon mentioned above. In 1062 the Buddhist canon in Chinese was published in Liao so that this text also was available as a source for translation. Tibetan originals were also used from the middle of the twelfth century. These originals appear to have been the most common source, though colophons suggest that the Tangut translators had recourse also to Sanskrit originals. Extant texts and some colophons suggest that the translation of the canon from Chinese was largely achieved during the course of the eleventh century. In the middle of the twelfth century the Tangut undertook the daunting task of checking and correcting the old translations. Most specialists agree that all fundamental Buddhist texts were rendered into Tangut; contemporary documents frequently make mention of *The Great Tripitaka in the Tangut tongue*.

The legal Tangut code indicates that by the middle of the twelfth century Buddhist communities were being formed along ethnic lines; it refers to specifically Tangut, Chinese, Tibetan and Tangut-Chinese, though not Tangut-Tibetan, or Uighur communities. The accepted Buddhist languages were Tangut, Chinese and Tibetan. Monks, however, were obliged to know also Sanskrit – “to pronounce precisely and distinctly the sounds of the Sanskrit tongue.”

Monks seeking election to office in the administration of a Buddhist community (*saṅgha*) were, according to a rule which had the force of law, obliged to learn a fixed minimum of texts. They had to be able to read and understand the *Prajñāparamitā sūtra* about the Virtuous Prince, who defended his state (*Ren wang hu guo boruo bolomiduo jing*); and the chapter about the deeds, prayers and vows of the *Bodhisattva Samantabhadra* (*Puxian pusa xing yuan ping*) from the *sūtra of the Flowering Word* (*Da fang guang fo hua yan jing*); *Lotus sūtra* (*Miao fu lian-hua jing*) and others.

The *sūtras* were written out by hand by professional monkscribes (see Cat. Nos. 72, 78-80) and published in the form of xylographs (see Cat. Nos. 74, 81); from the second half of the twelfth century, as some colophons testify, use was made of movable type. Although the possibility that some translations and publications were produced privately cannot be excluded, all existing colophons point to the publication and distribution of texts having been under state control. The transcription and

publication of *sūtras* were supported by private donations, the names of the donors frequently being recorded in colophons. In one case no less than seventy-eight subscribers, all named in the colophon, commissioned the transcription of a particular *sūtra*. There are many instances of a commission for a single chapter, or a half or part of a chapter. The donors' motives, also recorded in the colophons, are much the same as with all religions: concern for the life hereafter, in this case for a happy reincarnation preferably in the paradise of dead ancestors of the Buddha Amitābha, wishes for a successful delivery, salvation from misfortune, recovery from illness, and, in the case of emperors, the welfare of the state and the continuation of the dynasty. The collection of the Institute of Oriental Studies, St. Petersburg contains Buddhist texts dated from 1084 to 1225.

At the very heart of Buddhist belief was the figure of the teacher, above all the 'Teacher of Canon Law' (*fa shi*). The highest ranks of teacher were Great Teacher (*da shi*), Supreme Teacher (*shang shi*), State Teacher (*guo shi*) and Imperial Teacher (*di shi*). It was believed previously that the last of these titles was used only from the Yuan dynasty onwards, and was granted to the 'Phags-pa lama by Khubilai Khan yet it appears six times in colophons to Tangut texts. Existing materials would suggest the title Imperial Teacher was first used in Xia in the second half of the twelfth century, during the reign of Ren-xiao.

The same texts offer little information, however, about monasteries, and practically none at all about where they were situated apart from references to the mountains of Helanshan, where lived the famous translator-neophyte De Hui. There were, of course, temples and monasteries in all the larger towns, and in and around the capital. Some of the texts in the St. Petersburg Institute of Oriental Studies' collection were transcribed in Khara Khoto. Amongst those who commissioned these copies were: the man in charge of transport services from the town, the officer in command of the border guards, a local functionary, copyists from Khara Khoto, and the owner of one of the handwritten copies of the *Mahāratnakūṭasūtra* (Cat. No. 72). There is evidence too of translators and scribes working in Ganzhou (now Zhangye), which was the administrative centre for the area which included Khara Khoto. It seems clear that within Khara Khoto there was a monastery of The Five Wisdoms (*Pañca veda*). It was here that the translator Hui Zhao, mentioned seven times in colophons, worked, as well as the monks Hui Cong and Jue Zhao. The name of the Empress Lo, who is mentioned

in the Khara Khoto texts, was connected with a monastery of Heavenly Bliss, but its location is unknown.

It would seem that amongst the books found in the Khara Khoto *stūpa*, and outside it, there were some which were locally produced and others brought in from outside – from regional centres, the capital, China, and even, perhaps, Tibetan texts from Tibet itself.

The development of Tangut Buddhism was heavily influenced by both the Chinese and Tibetan branches. From China came the printed Chinese canon; from Tibet, when the period of its official persecution ended, came the basic teachings of Tibetan Buddhism. The northeastern regions of Tibet, in which the persecution of Buddhism was somewhat less severe, became a refuge for Buddhist teachers, and it was a part of these territories which, after the Tangut-Tibetan wars, was incorporated into the Tangut state. Among the authors of works found at Khara Khoto are a dozen or so of whom were acknowledged experts in Chinese and Tibetan Buddhism. They include Ming Xuan, the great *yogi*-teacher of Tibet and China; Hui Shi, the great teacher and counsellor of virtue in Tibet and China; the *fa-shi* Ldie Kachiei, expert on Western Tibet and China, Ming Man, the famous Tibetan and Chinese teacher; Rie-nu-ldiei-ko, who understood the innermost mysteries of Tibetan and Chinese teaching; and the expert interpreter of both Chinese and Tibetan, Rie-mi-ldiei-ko-nge. The books containing writings by these men are undated. What is notable, however, is that they were all familiar with both Tibetan and Chinese Buddhist traditions at the same time when, in all probability, these two branches of Buddhism were still much closer to each other than they would subsequently become. Amongst the translations from the Tibetan are works by dPal-brtsegs, Nāropa, and a Tibetan known by the Tangut name We Ndžiong, an interpreter of *sūtras*, *śāstras* and *vinayas*, the Great Teacher (*fa shi*) of the Tibetan state. Under the year 1153 there is mention of a Tibetan scribe called Shie, known as teacher, hermit and He who Sits in the Contemplative Posture.

There were native Tanguts too who were highly trained in the Tibetan language. The translator Kwo Fa Hui, a specialist on the *Tripitaka*, held the degree of Master of Tangut and Tibetan literature. The monk Hui Zhao had the title Expert in Tibetan and Tangut languages.

Evidence of Chinese influence is to be found in the presence among the authors of works found at Khara Khoto of the monk

Hui Zhu, Great Teacher of the Chinese state and tutor to the emperor, and the monk Hui Xuan, Chinese tutor to the emperor in the Buddhist mysteries. It is quite possible that both these men acted as tutors to the Tangut emperors. The monk Hui Sheng held the position of person in charge of translations from Tangut and Chinese. The famous group of Chinese monasteries in the mountains of Wutaishan were not far from Khara Khoto. In 1216 a translator and state teacher, known by the Tangut as Ghiong Xie Cie (Ming...), a novice from one of the monasteries of Wutaishan, is known to have been working in Xia. And among those who commissioned copies of Buddhist works is the monk Shan Guang, a novice from the mountains of Wutaishan. Among translators is found the name of Luo Shi, *fa shi* of the *Tripitaka* in the Chinese tongue. Another *fa shi* of the Chinese *Tripitaka* was one Ghei Thong-gho – though it is uncertain whether he was Chinese or Tangut.

There existed in the Tangut Empire the title of Teacher of the Three Tangut Doctrines, held by, amongst others, the monk Fa Bao. The three doctrines – Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism – all found fertile soil in Xi Xia. As an anonymous Tangut poet wrote:

“Tibetan, Chinese, Tangut – all three have but one mother!”

Chinese, Tibetan and other Influences

It was clearly of paramount importance to the Tangut in the twelfth century to find their own path and establish a sense of cultural and ideological unity. To this end they blended elements from the great treasure-houses of Chinese, Tibetan and Central Asian Buddhism, from Confucianism, and finally from Taoism. Like the Khitan before them, they conferred on Confucius the posthumous title of Emperor: and it is known that one of the sons of the Tangut emperor Yuan-hao died as a result of his obsession with Taoist techniques for achieving immortality. The great Confucian classics *Lun yǔ*, *Meng-zi* and *Xiao jing* were translated into Tangut, and fragments of the Tangut versions are extant as is a translated collection of quotations from Chinese classic texts.

The Confucian concept of *xiao* – respect for parents, elders, the ruler and his functionaries – and the ethical code of Chinese officialdom, took root in Tangut social life. Tangut military leaders also studied the famous treatise on warfare, *Sun-zi*. Fragments remain of Tangut versions of other Chinese milita-

ry treatises, such as the *Three Tactics* and *Six Tactics*.

Even so, it would be quite wrong to perceive Tangut culture as no more than a blend of Chinese and Tibetan influences and borrowings. Within this multi-racial state Tibetans remained largely Tibetans, Chinese – Chinese, and Uighurs – Uighurs. Incidentally, little light has yet been shed on Uighur influence in the surviving Tangut cultural artefacts. The basic population of Xia remained Tangut, regardless of any influences of Chinese or Tibetan culture. The ruling dynasty, moreover, despite a degree of sinicisation brought about by marriages, was in the twelfth century still pursuing its own path laid down by its ancestors, notably Yuan-hao. In 1190 Gule Maocai, who compiled the Tangut-Chinese dictionary *A Jewel in the Hand, Answering the Needs of the Age*, explained the essential nature of his work by asserting that in learning the language of their neighbours “the wise men of China should get to know those of the Tangut, and those of the Tangut – the Chinese.” Particularly remarkable are the colossal achievements of Tangut philologists; not only those who devised the Tangut script, but those also who compiled a series of dictionaries of their native tongue – dictionaries of rhyme, homonyms, synonyms, themes, and phonetics which established norms of pronunciation for the emerging literary language. That which was essentially Tangut lived on in popular mythology, often finding expression in odes, for example about the origins of the ruling dynasty, or the so called *Great Ode*, or the ode *Month after Month*. Here is a sample from the latter referring to the second month:

“Along the verges peach trees bloom; wild black geese fly,
A traveller walks, lightly shod and clothed.

Spring has melted the white snows of winter...

The moon shines above the western hills, and the storks’
call proclaims the beauty of the river.

The storks call, the river is beautiful, the moon sinks in
the west,

The storks fly, and the great face of the river is without
end.

With the third moon, two different birds sing in the forest,
heralds of gladness for all the land,

The mighty land, where the waters flow, the grass turns
green and in the mountains men hunt the wild yak,

While in the east, among the diamond-strong trees, the
cuckoo calls,

Searching out a bamboo thicket.

And the calling of the cuckoo, the green of the forests, the
 bright rays of the sun
 Promise abundance of 'yellow food' [butter, milk etc.] and
 summer crops,
 a time of plenty for all the world."

In another ode *On the Customs and the Independent Path of Xia* the poet writes:

"The fame of our great victories is abroad,
 The source, from which our wise men rise, flows on;
 Their sons will come to take their turn;
 Our customs and our manners, now hard set,
 Rise up as though on peacocks' wings!"

The idea of an independent path finds expression also in Tangut law no matter to what extent it may have been based on the Chinese model in such encyclopædic works as *Seas of Meanings*, *Established by Holy Men*, and in the very name of the Tangut state. What relics of the culture of Xia survive deserve exhaustive study. The artefacts in this exhibition, extraordinary in their variety, and testifying to the high degree of development of Tangut culture, were fortuitously preserved and equally fortuitously discovered. This wealth belonged to the people of a small town on the very fringe of the state, a town officially mentioned as a place of exile for criminals. What then must there have been in and around the capital, and in the regional centres? The only material evidence we have from outside Khara Khoto is the Dunhuang collection, untouched by the Tangut, who left traces

of their culture and was not destroyed by the Mongols. Everything else has perished. Of the imperial tombs, all that remain are the clay domes of the burial chambers, a few fragments of memorial steles and other structural remnants. Everything has perished, as did all traces of the contemporary Khitan and Jürchen cultures, which may well have been the equal of that of the Tangut. Only thanks to the Khara Khoto discovery can we expand our knowledge of Tangut culture beyond that provided by Chinese historians of the Yuan period in their histories of the Liao, Jin and Song dynasties.

The Imperial Dynasty of the Tangut

<i>Posthumous title</i>	<i>Personal name</i>	<i>Reign</i>
1. Tai-zu	Ji-qian	982-26 Jan. 1004
2. Tai-zong	De-ming	27 Jan. 1004-Sept./Oct. 1031
3. Jing-zong	Yuan-hao	Oct. 1031-end 1047/beg. 1048
4. Yi-zong	Liang-zuo	Jan. 1048-end 1066/beg. 1067
5. Hui-zong	Bing-chang	Jan. 1067-18 Feb. 1086
6. Chong-zong	Qian-shun	19 Feb. 1086-1 July 1139
7. Ren-zong	Ren-xiao	July 1139-16 Oct. 1193
8. Heng-zong	Chun-you	Oct. 1193-1 March 1206
9. Xian-zong	An-quan	March 1206-13 Sept. 1211
10. Shen-zong	Zun-xiang	Sept. 1211-July 1223
11. Xian-zong	De-wang	26 July 1223-25 Aug. 1226
12. Nanping wang shi	Shidurku	Sept. 1226-August 1227

The Art of the Tangut Empire. A Historical and Stylistic Interpretation

Kira Fyodorovna Samosyuk

The cultural background

In the tenth century A.D. the main caravan routes between China, the Silk Road,¹ and the West passed through the Tangut state of Xi Xia in the Great Bow of the Yellow River. Control of these trails, connecting China with Central Asia and the western world beyond, was a constant bone of contention among the local peoples. From the middle of the seventh century it was the Chinese who were nominally in control. From about 750 to 822 the Tibetans had the upper hand, and from them power passed to the Uighurs, who in 843 captured Turfan, Beshbalyk, Khara-shahr and Kucha, with only Khotan remaining independent. Towards the end of the tenth century it was the Turks who were beginning to dominate the region, while the Tanguts found themselves surrounded – on the west, east and south by the Uighurs, Chinese and Tibetans, and in the north-east by the Khitan state of Liao (916-1224) and the Jürchen Jin dynasty (1115-1234). Khitan Liao and Jürchen Jin turned out to be as short-lived as the Tangut Empire itself. Over a period of three hundred years, starting in the seventh century with the Tibetans, various steppe peoples – Khitan, Jürchen, Uighur, Tangut, – all struggled to establish independent states and, through the rapid creation of their own culture, to achieve parity with the great civilisations which surrounded them.

The cultural aspirations of these different peoples found expression in a variety of ways.

The Khitan and the Jürchen did not emerge from the Central Asian 'melting-pot' in quite the same way as did the Tangut and the Tibetans. Settling, as they did, in the conquered northern territories of China, they found themselves inevitably under the shadow of an ancient, well-founded civilisation.

In the pursuit of independent statehood, they were nonetheless drawn ineluctably to the culture of China, to its administrative and power structures, to its religious and moral doctrines, to its educational system, and to its literary, historical and artistic traditions.

The artistic culture of Liao was essentially no more than a development of that of the Tang dynasty (618-907), while that of the Jürchen Jin clearly reflected the art of the Northern Song (960-1126). True, they each had their native customs, their distinctive architecture, dress, hair style and weaponry, but these hardly constituted anything which could be called an individual culture; what they created, largely for reasons of prestige, was a

state culture, based primarily on the sinicisation of the higher strata of society, together with the development of a written language.

The culture of the Tangut

There is a curious Tangut text, dating from around the turn of the eleventh to the twelfth centuries, called *Grains of Gold in the Hand* – a sort of aid to the study of Tangut writing – in which the Tangut define, as it were, their own geographic, cultural and economic position vis-à-vis their neighbours:

The Tangut go boldly and joyfully forward,
The Khitan move at a gentle pace,
The Tibetans mostly revere Buddhas and monks,
But the Chinese all love secular writings.²

Later, in a twelfth century ode, they see themselves positioned between Tibet and China.

Far to the west stand the mountains of Tibet
Far to the east lie the lowlands of China...

"With these words", wrote Nevsky, "the Tangut themselves marked out the natural position of their state."³

Paintings from the Khara Khoto collection offer convincing confirmation of these two views, namely: the closeness of the Tangut to the Khitan, Chinese and Tibetans in the eleventh and early twelfth centuries, and their closeness to the Chinese and Tibetans in the remainder of the twelfth century.

In one of the finest examples of the Chinese style paintings, the *Guayin, Moon in Water* (Cat. No. 46),⁴ Tanguts are depicted with the tufa hair style, i.e. with the crown and back of the head shaved, and locks of hair hanging from the temples. This style was introduced by the reformist Tangut emperor Yuan-hao in 1033, and was modelled on that of the Khitan. Further analogies with the art of the Khitan Liao dynasty are to be found in *Official with Servant* (Cat. No. 63) and in the *Portrait of the Tangut Emperor*, destroyed, of which only a photograph has survived (Fig. 67). There are examples also of Liao pottery in the Khara Khoto collection.

Contacts with the Jin Empire are evident in two fine prints: *The Four Beauties* and *Guan Yu*. The first of these, which is dated before 1126, was printed in the town of Pingyang in Jürchen territory.⁵

Evidence of the cultural influence of the Khitan and the Jürchen on the Tangut is limited to isolated examples of adopted cultur-



37. *Bodhisattva and Dancing*
 Figures from a wall painting
 contemporary with Khara Khoto
 brought back to St. Petersburg
 by S.F. Oldenburg. (The State
 Hermitage Museum St. Petersburg).

al detail and the existence on Tangut territory of certain artefacts produced in Liao or Jin. The influence of China, Tibet and Central Asia, on the other hand, was much more profound: their artistic tradition was organically absorbed into that of the Tangut. The importance of the Khara Khoto collection lies precisely in the degree to which it reflects the whole compass of the new Tangut culture – new, because we may reasonably assume that there was an older underlying cultural tradition, which survived despite all reforms and innovations. This mythic stratum, pre-dating the foundation of the Tangut state, is barely detectable, however in the Khara Khoto finds. The vast majority of the objects found in the “Illustrious” *suburgan* serve only to underline the Tangut perception of their own position – “between Tibet and China.” The Buddhist paintings form the core of the collection, as would be expected of objects found in a *stūpa*. Yet, curiously, there are non-Buddhist objects too, which reflect the Taoist and Confucianist sides of Tangut religion and culture (Fig. 36, see also Cat. No. 62, Figs. 67, 66). It was important that these items also be included in the exhibition to give a complete picture of the Tangut culture.

The Buddhist Background

By the time of the foundation of the Tangut state, Buddhism and Buddhist art in Central Asia were already a thousand years old. The tradition was not simply well established, but had undergone a host of modifications in doctrine, ritual and artistic convention. The tenth to twelfth centuries marked the last stage in the evolution of Central Asian Buddhism, and the beginning of the Islamic conquest.

Buddhism came first to Central Asia from India, and prior to the eighth century underwent a continual process of adaptation and change. China absorbed both Indian and Central Asian forms of Buddhism. Chinese pilgrims brought back from both areas holy texts, the teachings of Śākyamuni, and samples of Buddhist art. In the sixth century two artists from Khotan, Weichi Bozhina and Weichi Iseng, working in the Chinese capital, caught the attention of the Chinese with their unusual themes and techniques. In the middle of the seventh century an envoy of the Tang court, Wang Xiuanze, brought back from a visit to India twenty scrolls of travel notes and three scrolls of illustrations, which were kept in the Imperial library. In the first half of the eighth century and in the tenth century, as the authors of the



medieval Chinese “histories” of painting tell us, envoys were sent to Khotan to acquire sample images of Vaiśravaṇa. Such instances are common. The period from the eighth to ninth centuries saw a widening influence of Chinese painting, as it is evidenced by wall-paintings of the Uighur period from Turfan. At the same time the Tibetans, who became masters of Central Asia for a hundred years, were making their presence felt. We can detect the presence of Tibetan artists at work in Dunhuang from the end of the eighth to the tenth centuries, and in Turfan during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The Hermitage possesses a wall painting, brought back by S.F. Oldenburg, which is contemporary with the Khara Khoto hoard (Fig. 37). The central part is missing, but the *bodhisattva* to the side is depicted in the same pose as *bodhisattvas* in *tangkas* in the exhibition. To the right are scenes from the life of Śākyamuni, and below, the familiar figures of dancing girls.

The succession of cultural influences affecting Central Asia, and the presence there, quite apart from the indigenous peoples, of Iranians and migrants from India, Sogdiana, China and Tibet, all led to the formation of an artistic tradition which, for all its heterogeneity, is a unique entity. The dissemination of Buddhism and its emergence as a popular religion in Central Asia involved the integration of extraneous and local traditions, the expansion of the pantheon, and the appearance of apocryphal *sūtras* in a variety of languages: Sanskrit, Tibetan, Khotanese, Chinese and Tangut.⁷

By the end of the ninth century Khotan had become a centre from which Buddhist manuscripts and iconographic models were disseminated to China and Tibet, and thence to the Tangut state. It was in Central Asia that the Mahāyāna canon took its final shape. M.I. Vorobyova-Desyatovskaya has traced through the *sūtras* of the Mahāyāna the gradual intrusion of *dhāraṇī* (formulaic incantations) and Vajrayāna (Tantrism).⁸ These *sūtras* were highly popular, since the chanting of *dhāraṇī* offered an accelerated path to salvation. The anthologies of *dhāraṇī*, *mantras*, prayers, and *sūtras* glorifying the names of Buddhas – of which there are many in the Khara Khoto collection (including catalogue number 71) – constitute a body of texts halfway between Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna, while the Mahāyāna *tantras* mark an intermediary stage on the path to Vajrayāna. The Tibetans, together with the other peoples of Central Asia played a major role in the creation of a unique ideological, cultural and religious amalgam and in the shaping of Vajrayāna.

For a detailed understanding of this new branch of Buddhism two *sūtras* are of particular interest; Tangut translations of both are in the Institute of Oriental Studies’ collection.

The first is the *Sūtra of the Five Defences*, the Central Asian version of which contains twice as many names of deities as the Pāli original. The work consists of five *sūtras* with *dhāraṇī*, each dedicated to one of the five mother-goddesses. The Institute of Oriental Studies’ collection contains more than thirty copies of this *sūtra* in Tangut (Fig. 38).

The second, the *Sūtra on the Names of Buddhas* (*Buddhanāmasūtra*), is also a work typical of Central Asian Buddhism (Fig. 39). Vorobyova-Desyatovskaya suggests that it was precisely in Central Asia that the figure of the *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara was transformed to become the patron and defender of Tibet. The cult of *Avalokiteśvara* was popular in the Tangut Empire (Fig. 40).

Buddhism in the Tangut Empire

The spread of Buddhism over the whole of Central Asia, including part of the Ordos, the Great Bow of the Yellow River and heartland of the Tangut, is evidence enough that the Tangut were familiar with the teachings of Śākyamuni. The territory settled by the Tangut had been converted to Buddhism even before the Tangut themselves arrived, as some of Kozlov’s finds clearly demonstrate. Among the small bronzes found at Khara Khoto, for example, is a figurine of the Northern Wei dynasty (386-535 A.D.). The Tangut state, moreover, was located between two major Buddhist centres: to the east, the great temple and monastery complex of Wutaishan; to the west, the cave temples of Mogao near Dunhuang. To the south, moreover, lay the border town of Lanchou with the famous monuments of Maijishan, and beyond that, Buddhist Tibet.

Further proof of the existence of Buddhism in the lands of the Tangut (or Miñag) prior to the foundation of the Tangut state is offered by a careful interpretation of a much-quoted story from the Tibetan chronicles, *The Blue Annals*. The story tells of three Buddhist ‘learned men’ who, around the end of the ninth century, fled westwards from Central Tibet to escape religious persecution. Passing through the lands of the Hor-Uighur, they arrived in Amdo, where they encountered an adherent of their faith, already well versed in the teachings of Buddha. The three ‘learned men’ formally initiated him into the faith, giving him

38. Mahāmāyūrīvidyārājñīsūtra
(Sūtra of the Five Defences or Five
Mother-goddesses). Cat. No. 82.

39. Buddhanāmasūtra (Sūtra on
the Names of Buddha). Cat. No. 71.





the name Dge-ba-gsa. Dge-ba-gsa thereupon set out northwards to the land of the Miñag, to the fortress of Čan-in-rtse (in Hanchow) where he continued his studies. Having settled in Amdo, he proceeded to erect, on the northern bank of the Yellow River, an area with a mixed Tangut and Tibetan population, a temple and a *stūpa*. This episode in the chronicle is followed by the intriguing line "Paint (*tyhon-rtsi*) was also found in this region." Thus it would seem that the pupil of the three 'learned men' from Tibet did not teach, but actually studied in the land of the Tangut, then founded a temple and in some way decorated it with 'paint'.

G.N. Roerich makes another interesting point: in the ninth century one of the famous translators (*lotsava*) of Sanskrit texts into Tibetan was a man called Tsami Sangnguas Dragpa, who came from the land of the Miñag, a Tangut. He spent twenty years in the monastery of Vikramaśīla in Bihar, Northeast India, and was recognised as one of its outstanding scholars. Unfortunately, such scraps of information about contacts between Tibetan Buddhists and the Tangut are rare."

In 1159 envoys of the Karma-pa sect visited the Tangut Emperor Ren-xiao.¹⁰ In the same year a temple of this sect was founded and, Ren-xiao presented gifts to the temple, including gold cords and a parasol to mark the completion of a *stūpa* on the site.¹¹ It was, curiously, the same emperor who in 1146 had officially introduced Confucianism and encouraged the spread of Chinese scholarship. Yet now, no more than thirteen years on, he conferred the title of Supreme Teacher (*shang shi*) on a disciple of g'Tsangso-ba, the founder of the Karma-pa sect Dusgsum-mkhyen-pa. In 1225 the second master of the school, Karma Pakshi, founded a monastery in the land of the Tangut.¹²

We know that the town of Khara Khoto itself survived until the 1380s, and that the Mongol conquest did not cause the instant disappearance of the Tangut language and culture. *The Blue Annals* furnish a good deal of information about the arrival in the land of the Tangut of teachers from Tibet.¹³ For the year 1360, for instance, the following is recorded: the *dharmasvāmin* Ran-byun rdo-rje, embodiment of the Karma-pa-shi, preached a sermon in the multinational town of Lanzhou, which during the eleventh to twelfth centuries had been claimed variously by the Chinese, Tibetans and Tangut. To his right stood interpreters into Mongol and Uighur and to his left – into Chinese and Tangut. So even in the mid-fourteenth century, when both the political and religious situation had undergone massive changes

with the rise and fall of the Mongol Yuan dynasty and the islamisation of Central Asia, former connections, former interests, and the former mix of peoples survived.

Dr. Heather Karmay relates that in 1222 a group of six monks of the 'Bri-gung-pa school, headed by gTsang-pa Dung-khur-pa, a disciple of Zhang Rinpo-che (1123-1193), were in the Tangut state and visited the headquarters of the Mongol Khan, thus becoming the first Tibetans ever to meet the Mongols.¹⁴ They were translators, and g'Tsang-pa reputedly served in this capacity for Genghis Khan himself.

Tibetan teachers were remarkably determined in spreading the faith and extending their sphere of influence. Their travels took them to the furthest reaches of the Buddhist world, from Ceylon and India to the Gobi Desert; they paid homage at the holy places of India and Nepal, followed in the footsteps of the Buddha Śākyamuni, studied in all the famous places of learning, then returned home only to set out once more on their spiritual quest. That same *dharmasvāmin* mentioned earlier, who had need of four interpreters, uttered words which "have been preserved like a holy relic: 'The duty of a monk is to go wherever a peaceful place is to be found, and to help the Doctrine and living beings'" ¹⁵

Let us recapitulate: The Tangut state was located "between Tibet and China." The Tangut received *sūtras* from China and went on pilgrimages to Wutaishan and Dunhuang. Their emperors affirmed Buddhism with extraordinary zeal, and built monasteries, temples and pagodas. On the evidence of the Khara Khoto collection the most popular branch of Buddhism was the cult of the Buddha Amitābha and the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara.¹⁶

During the Chinese Song dynasty (960-1279) Buddhism was no longer the creative and developing doctrine it had been during the Tang (618-907).

Hope of a better rebirth in the 'Pure Land' of Amitābha with the assistance of the merciful Avalokiteśvara (Guanyin) won the hearts of believers, who counted on the efficacy of prayer and the potency of a simple faith unburdened by intellectualism. For the Tangut, Chinese Buddhism was above all a pragmatic religion.

Equally simple and utilitarian was their worship of the planets and the constellations (Cat. Nos. 57, 58). The Khara Khoto collection contains no less than 26 images of the gods of planets and constellations, as well as several illustrated texts, all de-

signed for the workaday purpose of protecting man from malevolent external influences.

Buddhism also played an important part as one of the ideological bases of the Tangut state. Texts from Khara Khoto are confined to a fairly limited range of basic Buddhist scriptures, which were published in huge numbers and disseminated to bolster official doctrine. They were commissioned by members of the imperial household and published to coincide with important dates in the state calendar.¹⁷ A further insight into Tangut Buddhism is offered by the list of texts, which anyone wishing to hold office in a *saṅgha* (monastic community) was obliged to know.¹⁸

The fact that Buddhist *sūtras* were published under the auspices of the imperial family indicates the systematically planned nature of state policy in the Tangut state, and the importance of Buddhism in those plans.

The colophons of books in Chinese printed in Xi Xia, the Tangut state, as Menshikov points out "foretell the prosperity of the state, its leaders and its people, and invoke the blessing of the heavens and the Buddha on the dead ancestors and members of the imperial family."¹⁹

The Khara Khoto collection also contains Tantric texts that relate to the Diamond Vehicle (Vajrayāna) Buddhism; these are *sūtras* which include *dhāraṇī*, separate incantatory *dhāraṇī*, liturgies, descriptions of the rules governing individual rituals, and prayers. Some of these Tantric texts are of local origin, and are not to be found in the *Tripitaka*.²⁰

Professors Kychanov and Menshikov take differing views of Tangut Buddhism. Kychanov suggests that "basically, the Tangut adopted and developed Chinese Buddhism, that is, a form of Buddhism already under the control of a powerful state, and therefore lacking political force."²¹

Menshikov, on the other hand, concludes: "The prevailing form of Buddhism in the Tangut state combined features of 'Pure Land' Buddhism, or Amitāism and Tantrism. Such an amalgam is much more characteristic of Tibetan Buddhism, than of Chinese; we may say, then, that the population of the Tangut state, even the Chinese amongst them, were much closer to the Tibetan tradition. At the same time, their links with China, the source of so many texts of the Buddhist canon, are undeniable."²²

An examination of the Buddhist paintings from Khara Khoto tends to substantiate the view taken by Menshikov, albeit with

the qualification that Amitaism and Tantrism were not combined, but, rather, the two currents ran side by side.

Amitābha was venerated by Chinese, Tibetan and Central Asian Buddhists alike. All hoped to be reborn into the Pure Land of Amitābha in the West. Tantric Buddhism, or the doctrine of Vajrayāna, spread throughout the Far Eastern Buddhist world during the eleventh to twelfth centuries, and by synthesising elements of two cultures, gave rise to an entirely new Sino-Tibetan style in art.

Chinese and Tibetan Traditions in the Art of the Tangut

On a purely quantitative basis, the Chinese and Tibetan traditions are equally represented in the Khara Khoto collection. Just as they received *sūtras* and other texts from both countries, so the Tangut drew on iconographic models from both China and Tibet.

There is ample extant evidence of their requests for *sūtras*, but none relating to requests for icons. What we do have are the paintings themselves. Though the paintings in the Chinese style have to be considered masterpieces of the Song period, the question of who exactly painted them remains a mystery: it may have been Chinese artists working in China, Chinese artists working in Tangut Empire, or Tangut artists trained by Chinese masters. Oldenburg quotes a Chinese source of the late fourteenth century, which indicates that the Tangut were engaged in painting as early as the eleventh century. The same source suggests that the northeast Tibetans too were accomplished painters.²¹ Could one artist, irrespective of his birthplace, have mastered the two traditions – Tibetan and Chinese? Karmay, on the basis of a *maṇḍala* of Thousand-Armed Avalokiteśvara (Guanyin) from Dunhuang, now in the British Museum, claims it could indeed be so. Why then should a Chinese source sing the praises of Tangut artists? For the unique ‘Tangut’ quality of their work, which sets it apart from the Chinese style? Or else for their ability to reproduce either the Tibetan or Chinese style so well as to make it indistinguishable from the original? The fundamental question is whether we can identify a tradition which is purely and essentially Tangut in the Khara Khoto paintings. Was there a synthesis, an integration of two established artistic traditions (or three, if we include that of Central Asia), or was it simply a question of different traditions co-existing side by side? Was there an independence in art to

match the creation of an independent Tangut state and a body of national customs, so stoutly fought for and defended? The answer to the question can be reached only through a close analysis of the pantheon, iconography and style of the paintings in the Khara Khoto collection.

Pantheon of Buddhist Deities

The scrolls in the Chinese style depict:

1. Two scenes featuring the *Buddha Amitābha Greeting the Soul of the Righteous Man*, in which the Buddha is accompanied by the *bodhisattvas* Guanyin (Avalokiteśvara) and Dashizhi (Mahāsthāmaprāpta) (Cat. Nos. 40, 41); and *Amithāba Appearing before Worshipers* (Cat. No. 38);
2. The *bodhisattvas* Guanyin, *Moon in Water* (Avalokiteśvara) (Cat. Nos. 46, 47), *Mahāsthāmaprāpta* (Cat. No. 53), *Samantabhadra* (Cat. Nos. 51, 52) and *Mañjuśrī* (Cat. No. 50);
3. The gods of the planets with the Tejaprabha (Cat. No. 57);
4. *Vaiśravaṇa* (Cat. Nos. 54-56).

The pantheon is incomplete and certain subjects are recurrent. The *tangkas* in the Tibetan style depict:²²

1. *The Buddha Śākyamuni*. Images depicting the *Buddha Śākyamuni* are the most numerous in the collection, and, of these, the commonest are those of the most venerated image in the Buddhist world – the Diamond Throne Buddha.
2. An image of the eight great *caitya* (Cat. No. 6), in whose honour hymns were composed. They were also particularly revered by the Uighur, neighbours of the Tangut, as the Uighur manuscript of the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa-sūtra* (‘The Golden Glow’) indicates.
3. *Buddha Turning the Wheel of the Law* is probably a reworking of some famous image of the ‘Lord of Healing’ *Medicine Buddha* (*Bhaiṣajya-bhataraka*) with his companions (Cat. Nos. 7, 8), widely known in all the countries of Northern Buddhism.
4. Other Buddhas including several images of *Amitābha* (Cat. No. 9).
5. Series of Buddhas include five *dhyānibuddhas*, thirty-five penitence Buddhas, and a series of eighty four Buddhas surrounding the Buddha himself.
6. Of the *bodhisattvas* we have: *Avalokiteśvara*, *Padmapāṇi-Lokeśvara*, *Eleven faced*, *Eight-armed Avalokiteśvara* (Cat. Nos. 12-16), and two forms of *Mañjuśrī* (Cat. No. 18). Female *bodhisattvas*: *Uṣṇīṣavijayā* (Cat. Nos. 20, 21), *Cundā*,

Green Tārā (Cat. No. 19), *Māricī* (Cat. No. 23) and *Sitātapatrā* (Cat. No. 24).

Udamas: Saṃvara (Cat. Nos. 27-29).

Dharmapālas: Acala (Cat. Nos. 31, 32), *Mahākāla-Vighnāntaka* (Cat. No. 30), *Jambhala*.

Lokapalas: Vaiśravaṇa (Cat. Nos. 54-56) (in engravings, a complete set that is *Virupaṣka*, *Virūḍhaka*, *Dhṛtarāṣṭra*).

7. Female deities: *Kurukullā* (Cat. No. 25), *Ekajaṭā* (Cat. No. 19), *Vajravārāhī* (Cat. No. 22).

8. *Dākinī: Indraḍākinī* (Cat. Nos. 33-35), *Buddhaḍākinī*, *Naroḍākinī*, and *Pagmo-dan-duv*.

9. People: *Mahāsiddhas* (Cat. Nos. 11, 22) and some unidentified monks and teachers (Cat. No. 61).

10. Various *maṇḍalas* (Cat. Nos. 20, 21, 28, 29).

As Oldenburg commented: "Here we have more or less precisely the same pantheon as in present-day Tibet and Amdo, except that the lama-teachers are different."²⁶

Paintings in the Central Asian or Sino-Tibetan style represent:

1. *The Pure Land of Amītābha* (Cat. No. 43).

2. *Greeting the Soul of the Righteous Man on the Way to the Pure Land of Amītābha* (Cat. Nos. 39-41).

3. *Bodhisattvas: Eleven-faced, Eight-armed Avalokiteśvara* (Cat. No. 12), *Samantabhadra* (Cat. No. 52).

4. *Lokapāla: Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera* (Cat. No. 55).

5. *Maṇḍala: a maṇḍala of the planets*.²⁷

This pantheon is evidently much less complete and more representative of the Chinese tradition. It is rather curious that engravings from the Khara Khoto collection reveal a quite different pattern.

Iconography

The iconography of the Buddha Amītābha and the *bodhisattvas* in the Chinese style corresponds largely to the Song tradition.²⁸ Rules governing the depiction of deities in the Vajrayāna pantheon were laid down in India, and had to follow *sādhana*s, texts defining the visual appearance of the deity – colour, pose, ornaments and attributes, together with his *mantra*, the ritualistic verbal formula through which a deity was invoked. The two most famous collections of *sādhana*s were compiled by Abhayākara Gupta, an Indian writer of the eleventh century.²⁹ The iconography of the deities in the Khara Khoto collection rarely corresponds precisely to the published *sādhana*s. As G. Tucci

has remarked: "There is hardly any great master who has not composed *sādhana*s, who has not, that is to say, recorded in writing the visions which appeared to his spirit during the time of spiritual concentration."³⁰

The books and manuscripts from Khara Khoto include several texts which offer guidance on meditation, or invocations, together with a visual description of the deity concerned. There are, for instance: a pocket prayer book containing a prayer to the *bodhisattva* Mañjuśrī and a description of his appearance (TK 75); a guide to meditation on Vajravārāhī (A-19), the subject of a popular cult, as witnessed by about twenty various texts and eight *tangkas*; several *sādhana*s of Mahākāla (F-315, B-59); and an anthology of *sādhana*s and *dhāraṇīs* of various deities in the Tantrist pantheon. These texts have yet to be exhaustively studied.³¹

The iconography of works in the Central Asian tradition generally varies according to the particular national school with which a given piece can be associated. The catalogue entries give details. Suffice it to say here that, while elements of both Chinese and Tibetan iconographic conventions are to be found, it is the stylistic, rather than iconographic, features of these works which ultimately determine their attribution to the Sino-Tibetan school.

Style

The artefacts from Khara Khoto are characterised by elements of style corresponding to the three prevailing cultural traditions – Chinese, Tibetan and Central Asian. (A fourth, which might be called the local Khara Khoto tradition, was very much a product of these three.) In some cases the three traditions blend and overlap.

The particular features of each tradition are best observed under the following headings:

- (i) the treatment of space and the elaboration of background;
- (ii) composition, scale and the disposition of figures;
- (iii) line and colour, where they are not simply iconographic in nature;
- (iv) posture – again, where this is not simply a matter of iconography;
- (v) the nature of the central and secondary figures depicted;
- (vi) clothing, headdress and hairstyle;
- (vii) decorative detail – ornaments, flowers, trees.

Chinese Style Works

The Chinese style paintings from Khara Khoto are characterised by vacant backgrounds, empty space, whose treatment has its origins in the tradition of painting on silk, particularly of landscapes. The wall paintings of Dunhuang containing elements of landscape become 'sinicised' from the middle of the sixth century when backgrounds of clear space first appear. This vacant compositional element is a plastic representation of the very idea of emptiness; it also reflects the meditational ritual undergone by the artist in order to achieve a conscious perception of the picture he is about to paint. Just as in a landscape the concrete natural forms materialise from empty space, so in such paintings as *Amitābha Appearing before Worshippers* (Cat. No. 38) or *Greeting the Soul of the Righteous Man on the Way to the Pure Land of Amitābha* (Cat. No. 39) the figure of the Buddha emerges, or manifests itself, on a background of empty silk in the consciousness of the meditating artist.

In scrolls of this type (Cat. Nos. 38-42) the Buddha Amitābha is depicted looking down from the heavens, or a cloud, on to the earth below, that is on to the lower part of the scroll, which is occupied by the figure of a man at prayer, or by donors. Looking at the painting, one is raised to the heavens or brought closer to the figure, and the figure of the Buddha by virtue of its size; or that at least is how the European observer sees it. In actual fact a painting does not assume the existence of an observer; the figure of the Buddha rises only insofar as he is visualised by the man at prayer, or as a sort of aid to such a visualisation.

Asymmetry was a favourite device of Chinese artists from the beginning of the tenth century. Diagonal constructions, and the interaction of figures and background generate a sense of movement, a dynamic link between the spheres of earth and heaven, to which the soul of the righteous man aspires. The *Amitābha Appearing Before Worshippers* and *Greeting the Soul of the Righteous Man* adhere in every detail to the Chinese Song tradition, as do also *Mañjuśrī* and *Samantabhadra* (Cat. Nos. 50, 51). These last two paintings clearly echo the famous depictions of the same two *bodhisattvas* at Dunhuang.

The impression of a fluent, spatially organised composition is created primarily by the displacement of the central figures relative to the central axis, the slight twist of their bodies, and the elegance and ease of their posture.

In Chinese paintings the image is created above all by line (ex-

cuted, of course, by brush). The brush outlines the figure, makes the curve of the shoulder, models the neck and chest. The function of line is not to capture static form, to give a finished impression of, or 'freeze', the object observed. On the contrary, the line in Chinese art is dynamic, it has a life of its own, quite independent of the object portrayed. It is line which renders the folds of a dress or a ribbon as light as gossamer. In the *Mañjuśrī* and *Samantabhadra* the paint has almost completely flaked off, leaving only contour. Sad though that may be, it serves to reveal the absolute mastery of the artist's brush.

Colour and paint are best preserved in the paintings of the *Planets Deities* (Cat. No. 57) and *Mabāsthāmaprāpta* (Cat. No. 53). The former, with its clear red-green tones, dates from the eleventh century and is one of the earliest paintings in the collection (see below for details on dating). The chilly palette of the *Mabāsthāmaprāpta*, based on a blend of pink, lilac, blue and green, dates it unmistakably to the end of the Southern Song and the beginning of the Yuan dynasty, that is the thirteenth century. The postures of the figures, dress, decorations, ornaments and flowers (described in detail in the catalogue entries and analysed in the article by M. Rudova) are wholly typical of painting of the Song dynasty.

Tibetan Style Works

The Tibetan *tangkas* from Khara Khoto can be viewed in different ways. Seen simply as products of Tibetan culture, they may be held to offer insights into how the Central Tibetan artistic tradition was formed, and its connections with Nepal, India of the Pāla (750-1155 A.D.) and Sena (mid-twelfth–mid-thirteenth centuries) dynasties, Kashmir, Ladakh and Western Tibet. They are more interesting if seen as specifically Tangut artefacts, which bear witness to Tibet's extraordinarily active role in the spread of Buddhist teaching, the burgeoning influence of Tibetan culture, and the new wave of Vajrayāna Buddhism which swept across Central Asia after the tenth century.

This exhibition of the unique collection of Tibetan style *tangkas* from the "Illustrious" *suburgan* and their reproduction in this book opens the way for further study by scholars of all nations. This article will attempt only to outline their most obvious features, and to indicate their affinity or even complete conformity with the art of Central Tibet.

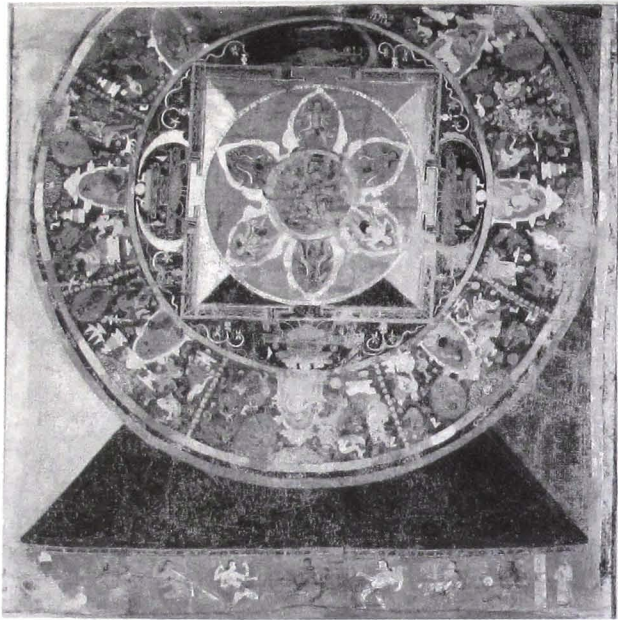
The backgrounds of the Tibetan style *tangkas* in the Khara Kho-

to collection consist of a plain ground of blue or green, strewn with flowers. Painted *maṇḍalas* represent the geometrical projection on to a flat surface of the four corners of the world, zenith and nadir.

In a few *tangkas* (Cat. Nos. 9-11, 19) and engravings,¹² mountains form the background. The mountains are depicted in the stylised form of contiguous, vertically elongated triangles, painted red, blue, yellow or green. Occasionally the triangles contain small circles, apparently denoting weathered rock faces (Fig. 41). Dr. M. Rhie has observed that this particular stylised depiction of mountains appears in Indian sculpture as early as the second century and, at a somewhat later date, in manuscripts from both India and Nepal.¹³ Yet, curiously, it is not found either in wall paintings in the oases of Central Asia, or in early works at Dunhuang. The Hermitage collection contains a wall painting of the signs of the zodiac from Kucha, which perfectly exemplifies the 'compartmental' style, in which the mountains form patterned rhomboid surfaces.¹⁴ The artists of Dunhuang from the fifth to the beginning of the sixth centuries modified this tradition, separating the rhombi and creating a freer sense of space, in which the mountains are arranged as series of irregular circles and give a rhythmic dynamism to the painting. This tradition of depicting mountains as a series of geometrical plates passed from Nepal and India to Tibet, and thence to Khara Khoto, but no trace of it is found in the art of Central Asia and the Far East. It is worth noting also that in engravings in the Chinese style, grouped figures, are shown against a background of clouds or in celestial halls, whereas Nepalese-Tibetan engravings have a mountain background, as though to suggest that the abode of the Gods was in fact the Himalayas.

Composition in the *tangkas* is strictly symmetrical and executed in a single plane. The most common compositional form is one based on a central figure, which by virtue of its greater size creates the illusion of standing nearer to the observer. Colour is used to enhance the illusion; the cold blues and greens of the minor figures make them seem further away, while the warmer, brighter reds and golds of the central figure seem to bring it closer to us (Fig. 42). The Buddha's right hand, in a *mudrā* (symbolic gesture) of calling the earth to witness, touches the ground in front of his throne. For all the uniplanar nature of the composition, the throne and altar in front of the Buddha, or the pool in depictions of 'The Pure Land', are shown in linear per-





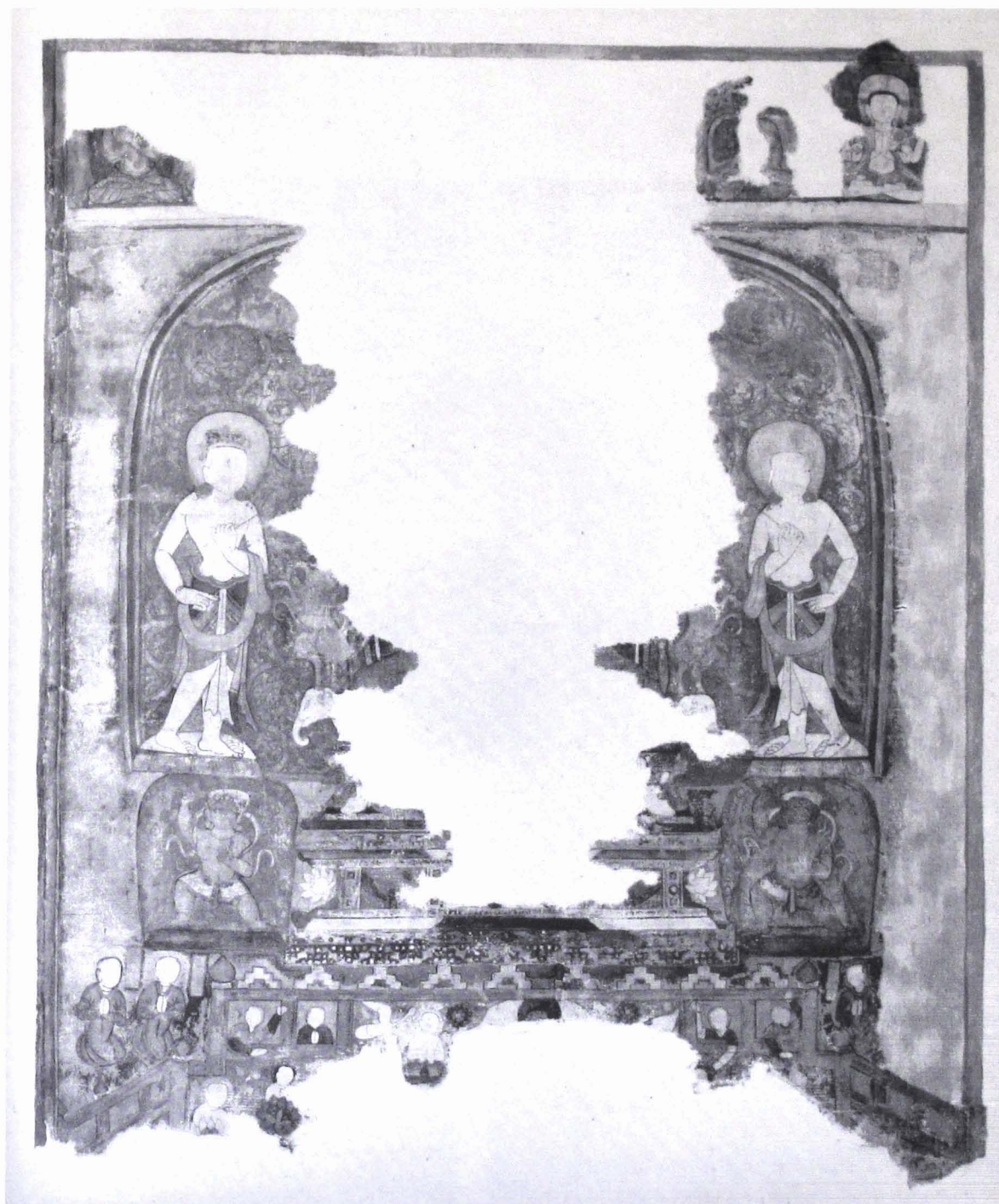
spective (Cat. Nos. 43-45). This perspective does not however endow the painting with any sense of depth; it affects only the object in question, bringing it forward and thus emphasising further the apparent proximity of the central figure. Sometimes the artist models the body of the Buddha in the Indian fashion, by using shades of a single colour (Cat. Nos. 7, 8, 35).

The minor figures are arranged within a surrounding rectangle, or symmetrically arranged in groups according to the rules of iconography. The hierarchy of divine beings determines their relative sizes. Outline is so expressive as sometimes to appear engraved on the surface of the picture; consequently, each figure imprints itself on the memory. The achievement by the artist of such high definition was clearly vital, given the function of *tangkas* and *maṇḍalas* as aids to meditation. Etched in finest detail, the divine beings could be re-created in the contemplator's consciousness (Fig. 43).

Looked at as a whole, the Tibetan style *tangkas* in the Khara Khoto collection tend to align themselves with the art of Central Tibet. Their overall form, the importance of outline, and the palette all bear this out. Other similarities to the Central Tibetan tradition lie in the surrounds of painted precious stones, the typical use of vines as background design, and the tight scroll-work on the back of the Buddha's throne. Most scholars agree that compositions based on a central figure with one other figure to each side, and with horizontal friezes at top and bottom of the picture connect Central Tibetan art with the Indo-Nepalese tradition. Rectangular cells containing separate figures of deities surrounding a central figure, or rectangular 'miniatures' depicting donors or monks in the bottom left and right hand corners are also compositional features typical of the Nepalese school. Hairstyle, costume and ornament are all borrowed from the art of the Pāla and Sena dynasties (Fig. 44). The typical robe of the Khara Khoto *bodhisattvas*, reaching to the ankle, and translucent, has its parallels in the Nepalese and Indian tradition." The undergarment is of two types: short, not covering the thighs, or of striped material reaching half way down the thighs (Cat. Nos. 2, 8, 12).

In *tangkas* brought by Oldenburg from Central Asia and now kept in the Oriental Department of the Hermitage, *bodhisattvas* are dressed in one further type of robe, which is long and opaque (Fig. 45).

Thrones in the Tibetan *tangkas* are of various types: an Indo-Nepalese variety with a slatted back, decorated with carving





and precious stones (Fig. 43; Cat. Nos. 2, 8), and a variety decorated on the sides with leogryphs standing on elephants (Fig. 46). The earliest analogy to the second type which comes to mind is a clay nimbus of the ninth-tenth century from Dunhuang, in the Hermitage collection.

Whatever the *tangkas* on display may have in common with the art of Central Tibet, there is much that is distinctive about them also. By far their most interesting and distinctive iconographic feature – and one, furthermore, which is not yet fully understood – is the row of ‘dancing girls’ in the lower half of the painting. They number between three and six, and are sometimes playing musical instruments (Cat. No. 19), sometimes bearing gifts of the sort which would normally stand on an altar, and sometimes without attributes. Various suggestions have been made about how they should be understood. G. Leonov suggests that they are either five female *tathāgatas*, or a group of five goddesses such as the five earth goddesses, or the daughters of Māra.¹⁰ A more likely explanation is that these ‘dancing girls,’ whether bearing gifts or not, personify a block of Tantric formulae, or the syllables of a *mantra* of some particular deity. This interpretation is certainly suggested by one of the finest *tangkas* in the exhibition (Fig. 47), which has Vajravārāhī as its central figure. The six lesser figures within the *mandorla* correspond to the six dancing goddesses beneath. The Khara Khoto collection contains another *tangka* of Vajravārāhī (not included in the exhibition) with four surrounding figures and four ‘dancing girls’ below. Unfortunately, we do not know all the *mantras* or *sādhana*s with *mantras* dedicated to the various deities. Nonetheless, this interpretation seems as plausible as any other. What cannot yet be established is whether the ‘dancing girls’ are actually unique to the Central Asian tradition, or whether it is simply that no Tibetan or Indo-Nepalese parallel has yet been discovered.

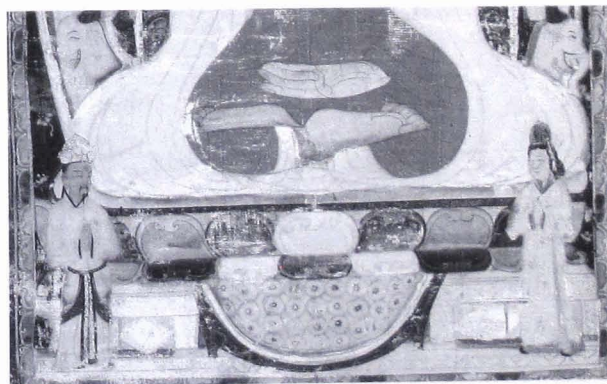
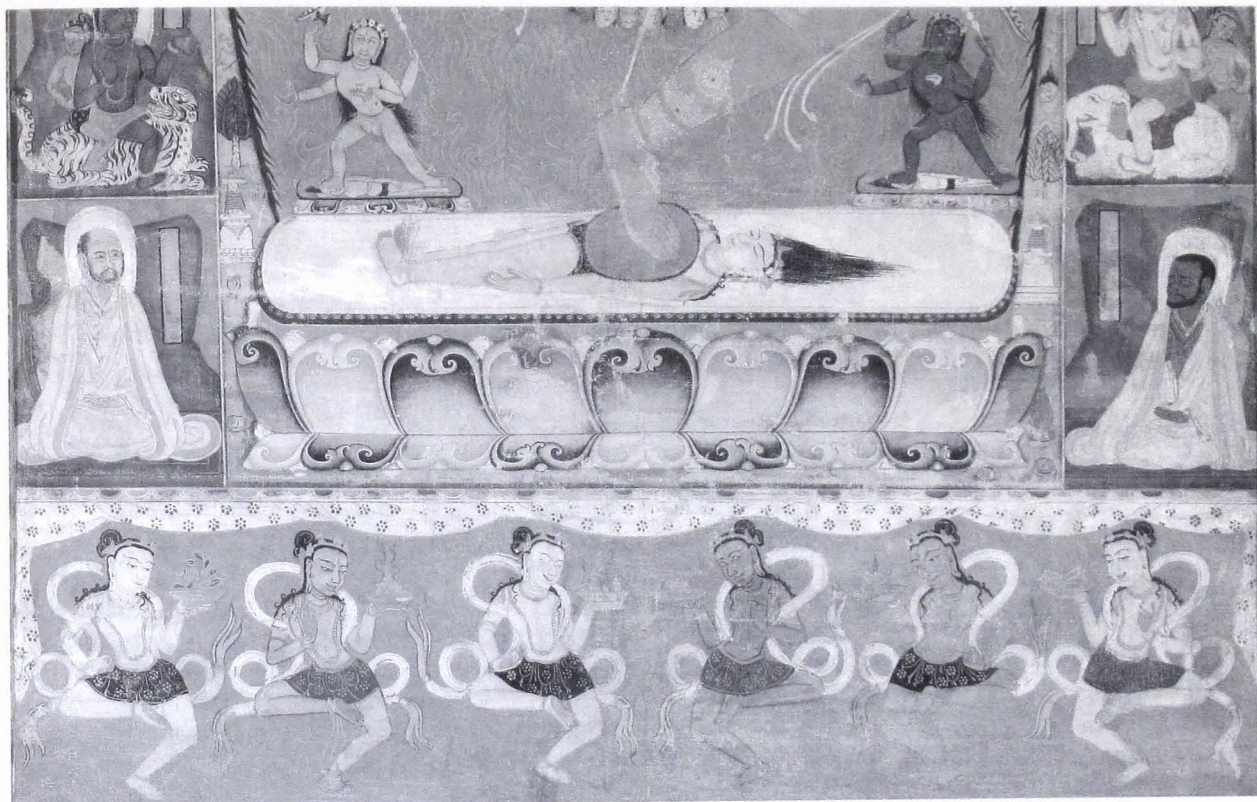
A second distinctive feature of the Khara Khoto *tangkas* is that in the paintings depicting more than one figure, the grouped deities share either a common background or a common cushion or throne.

A third, at first glance insignificant, but in fact very interesting detail is the rug hanging from the throne, it is always red, with a flowered pattern and blue edging. Its shape and pattern are subject to some slight variation, but the rug hangs without folds, giving the impression of a heavy woolen fabric (Figs. 48, 49). The blue edging hangs in folds, forming an undulating pattern.

47. Detail. Vajravārāhī. Cat. No. 22.

48. Detail. Eleven-faced, Eight-armed Avalokiteśvara. Cat. No. 12.

49. Detail. Portrait of a Monk. Cat. No. 61.





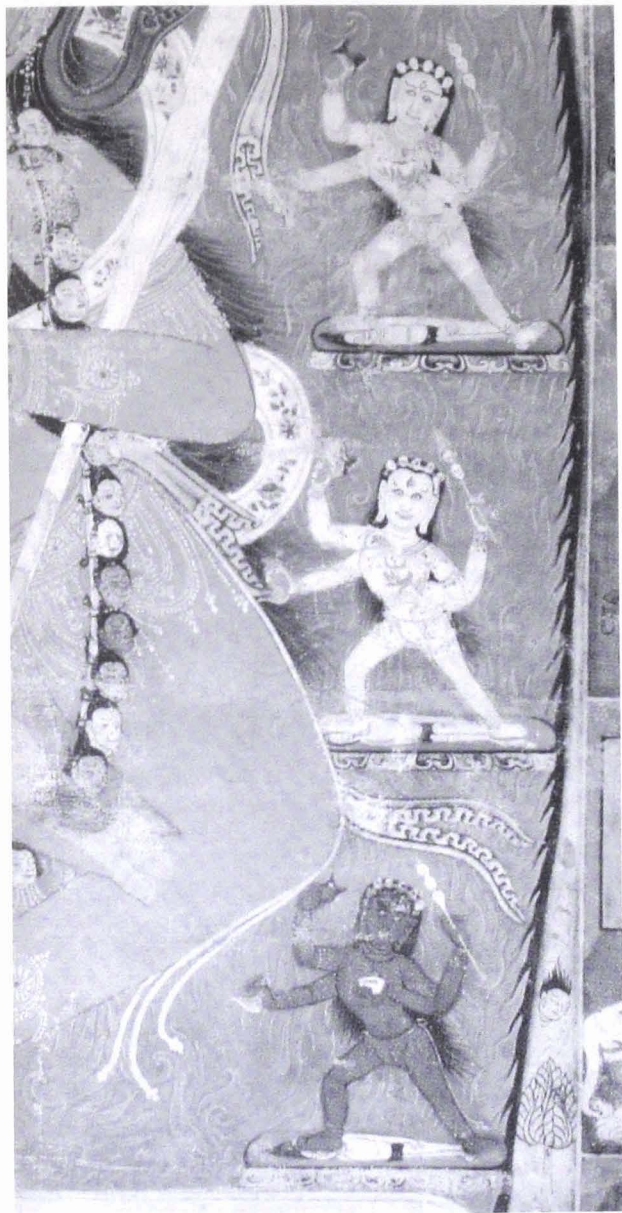
The same pattern of folds is found in the belt hanging from the waist of Padmapāṇi and the edges of his dress (Fig. 50), the fluttering ribbons of Vajravārāhī (Fig. 51), and elsewhere. On closer examination, however, some differences can be seen. The folds in *Padmapāṇi's* dress are outlined in black and hang freely, while those in Vajravārāhī's ribbons are outlined in white and are evenly arranged. The same variation is to be observed also in the treatment of lotus leaves. These small but important details, seen as part of an overall style, affirm the existence of differing artistic schools at work in the creation of the Tibetan style *tangkas* from Khara Khoto.

The central figure in these *tangkas*, painted full-face, usually has what are conventionally known as 'Tibetan' features, a rounded or squarish face, with a broad and elegantly delineated nose. The latter, incidentally, is conveyed only by the base of the nose and the nostrils. The surrounding *bodhisattvas* are painted three-quarter-face and have 'Indian' features, long, aquiline noses drawn in their entirety from bridge to tip. In the painting of Eleven-faced, Eight-armed *Avalokiteśvara* (Fig. 52), the central figure looks Tibetan, those surrounding him look Indian, and the monks/disciples of Buddha in the corners of the central rectangle give the appearance of having been painted by a Chinese artist. It combines, therefore, two distinct artistic manners, and this gives some grounds for attributing it to a third category of painting, the Sino-Tibetan, or Central Asian group. However, the presence of such isolated alien elements does not in effect alter the overall 'Tibetan' feel of the *tangka*, and must be considered a chance occurrence. Another similar example is the *tangka* of the *Medicine Buddha* (Fig. 53), where the *bodhisattvas* of Sun and Moon hold typically Chinese, pre-Buddhist attributes: a three-taloned raven and a hare.

The Khara Khoto *tangkas*, then, are uniformly typical for the period in which they were produced, and uniformly identifiable with the Central Tibetan tradition. For all that, they do display certain stylistic variations.

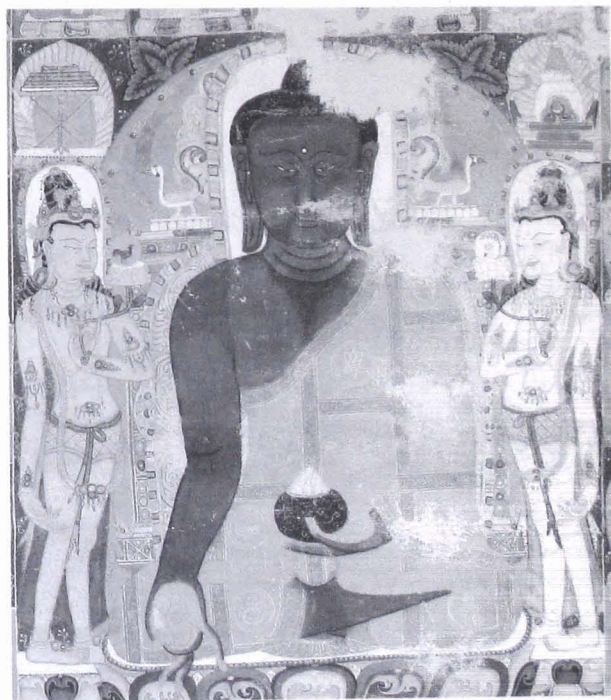
The white Padmapāṇi (Fig. 50) and the yellow Mañjuśrī (Fig. 54) are so similar that they seem to have been cut from the same painting. They share the same rounded face, large mouth with painted lower lip, 'archaic' smile and flared nose. They are painted full-face, in which respect they are different from all the other paintings in the collection, since elsewhere *bodhisattvas* flanking a central figure are all painted three-quarter-face, with their primitively straight legs in profile. Each of these two fig-

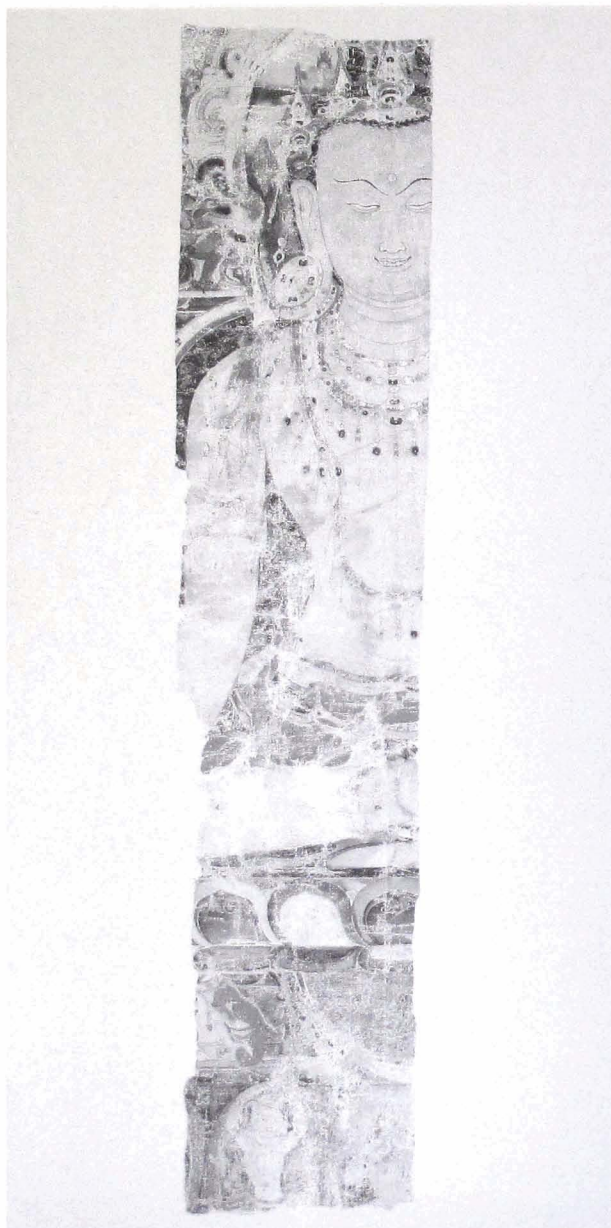
51. Detail. Vajravārāhī. Cat. No. 22.



52. Detail. Eleven-faced, Eight-armed Avalokiteśvara. Cat. No. 12.

53. Detail. Bhaiṣajyaguru (Medicine Buddha). Cat. No. 7.





ures and the *bodhisattvas* (Cat. No. 2) wear a horizontal translucent scarf. Meditational cords hang below their knees, another feature unique to these particular works. The painting of figures either full or threequarter-face, the arrangement of the figures and placement of their feet are important keys to style and date. A Vajrapāṇi in the British Museum collection, for example, is full-face, with the body in a somewhat wooden, frozen posture; it is from the ninth century.³⁷ Our Padmapāṇi, on the other hand, which is full-face but with the feet in profile, dates probably from the eleventh century. *Bodhisattvas* presented threequarter-face, but with their feet in profile, such as the one in the wall painting in the temple of Ivang are twelfth century.³⁸ The illuminated cover of a manuscript in the British Museum, where the figure is slightly turned, with one leg bent at the knee, heel raised, and the tip of the toes touching the ground, is dated to the thirteenth century.³⁹ Fragments of a *tangka* in the Hermitage – probably also of the thirteenth century – indicate that such postures were used in the Central Asian tradition, while a wall-painting of the eleventh-twelfth centuries in the Hermitage collection displays the feet in profile (Figs. 37, 45).

The painting of Vajravārāhī (Fig. 55) contains other obvious stylistic variations.⁴⁰ The full-bodied red coloration, the elongated figures, the typical white outline used to delineate the lacy, interwoven decoration on the body of the goddess, her facial features, the treatment of the tongues of flame, the means by which heads are attached to the cord of her garland, the way trees are depicted, the device of a curtain which frames the dancing figures at the base of the *tangka* are all stylistic features which have no parallel in the Khara Khoto *tangkas*.⁴¹

The *Paramasukha Cakrasaṃvara Yab-Yum Luipa Maṇḍala* (Cat. No. 26) is similarly without parallel in the collection. The *Green Tārā* (Cat. No. 19) and the three fragments of a single icon depicting mountain scenery (Cat. Nos. 9-11) also constitute a discrete group, and, were it not for the inscription in Tangut, Tibetan and Chinese, they might easily be attributed to the Nepalese school.⁴²

In four of the paintings in the exhibition elements of the Chinese and Tibetan styles are combined, though the combination is effected differently in each. They are: *The Pure Land of Am-itābha and Bhaiṣajyaguru with Seven Companions* (Cat. No. 43), *Samantabhadra* (Cat. No. 52), *Avalokiteśvara* (Cat. No. 14), and *Kubera (Vaiśravaṇa)* (Cat. No. 55).

When we say they belong to the Sino-Tibetan school, we mean,



56. Detail. The Pure Land of Amitābha and Bhaiṣajyaguru with Seven Companions. No. 43.



57. Detail. The Pure Land of Amitābha and Bhaiṣajyaguru with Seven Companions. Cat. No. 43.



as H. Karmay puts it "Tibetan art strongly influenced by Chinese, or Chinese art strongly influenced by Tibetan."⁴¹

The wide dissemination of Tantric doctrine contributed to the coupling of two cultures, from which the Sino-Tibetan school was born. It came to play a crucial historical role in the culture of Central Asia, Tibet and China. In the twelfth to fourteenth centuries it found its clearest expression in engravings illustrating *sūtras*, which were printed in China as well as the Tangut state. It is also evident in the wall paintings of the period in the temples of Mogao ku and Yülin ku near Dunhuang, in the sculptures of Maijishan (Gansu province) and in the Feilaifeng complex near Hangzhou.

S.F. Oldenburg found the synthesis of the two traditions puzzling. He probably knew nothing of the engravings illustrating the Khara Khoto *sūtras*, and therefore believed the 'Pure Land' painting (Cat. No. 43) to be unique. He writes: "The major part of the scroll is in the Chinese manner; only the Buddha figures at the top are Tibetan in style. This is the only example known in which these two fundamentally different styles meet. How we may explain this phenomenon is presently impossible to say."⁴² The figures of Amitābha and other Buddhas in the upper part of the *tangka* are presented full-face on a deep red background in which musical instruments hang suspended. A lotus pool maintains the iconographic conventions of similar works at Dunhuang, but is foreshortened by perspective. The bottom corners are embellished with an unbroken pattern of lotus flowers: this pattern seems to be derived from the curled background patterning in Tibetan *tangkas*, though without its intricacy.

On a background of golden lotuses sit two monks: an older man with a light face, and a younger, dark-faced man (Figs. 56, 57). The faces are painted in typically Chinese style, yet the background of a rock face is typically Tibetan (see for example, the rocks in Fig. 55). Moreover, behind the monk on the right is preserved a fragment of scroll decoration, which is typical of many *mandorlas*. Yet, however disparate in origin, these elements combine naturally to create a unified and satisfying whole.

Variations in the Sino-Tibetan (Central Asian) style can be observed in *Samantabhadra* (Cat. No. 52) and *Avalokiteśvara* (Cat. No. 13). Both are on silk, but apart from that, they have nothing in common, and are clearly the product of different schools or different studios.

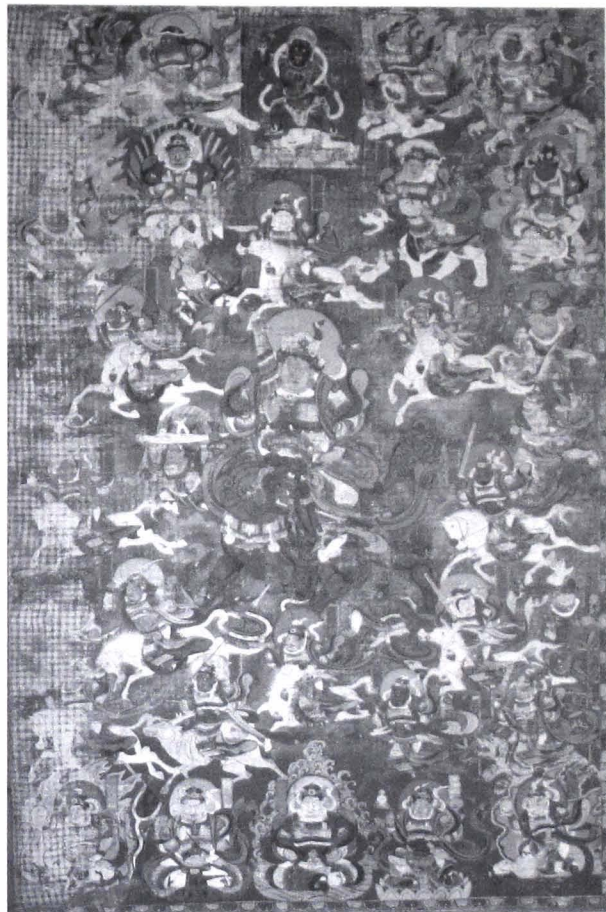
In a class of its own is one of the most interesting of all the multi-

figure *tangkas*, the *Vaiśravaṇa* (Fig. 58). Its composition is that of a *maṇḍala*. The Tibetan *Mahākāla* is combined with Chinese-style horsemen, the ponderous and static five Jambhala in the bottom row, with the powerful movement at the centre of the composition, and the attributes of deities in the Vajrayāna pantheon; and with the armour of Chinese warriors. The squarish faces, large noses, described by two straight lines, the shape of the crown and the armour, the intense dynamism of the horses, the realism of the wild beasts, and the overall naturalism, all seem to suggest a work of a later date. The *Vaiśravaṇa* dates from no earlier than the second half of the fourteenth century, since all the features mentioned above are associated with the art of the Mongolian Yuan dynasty (1280-1367).

The particular features of these four works of Sino-Tibetan art do not offer grounds for attributing them to the Uighur, Tangut, or any other national school. Were we to assume for a moment that we had no idea where our collection actually came from, and were we to try to pin down its place of origin, then we would undoubtedly identify the third group of works with the art of Central Asia, which occupies a very distinctive place in the culture of the Orient.

We can now, therefore, return to the question posed earlier: what exactly is Tangut in the pictures from Khara Khoto? Can we indeed talk about a specifically Tangut artistic synthesis, distinct from the individual Chinese, Tibetan, and Central Asian schools? Was there truly an independent movement in art? As this article has attempted to demonstrate, nothing can be detected which is especially and uniquely Tangut – which is why a Chinese author described the Tangut as masterly imitators, whose works could not be distinguished from the Chinese or Tibetan originals. As an illustration, consider the case of the *Green Tārā* (Cat. No. 19), one of the great masterpieces of the Hermitage collection. This silk tapestry, woven by the *kesi* technique, and a perfect example of Tibetan-Nepalese art, was almost certainly made by Tangut craftsmen, because we know there were workshops in the Tangut state which specialised in *kesi* technique.

Not that the Tangut did not try to create their own school. True, only two of the paintings we have give any indication of an emerging school, the *Samantabhadra* (Cat. No. 52),⁴ and another painting, of the *God of the Planets*, which is not in the exhibition. They share one very particular feature; the faces of the central *bodhisattvas* and deities are distinctively Tangut in appear-



ance, as described in written sources and illustrated by portraits of donors, long, with strong features, a heavy chin and a typical large nose.

There is no question but that all the artefacts discovered by Kozlov were part and parcel of Tangut culture. It was Tanguts who commissioned them, they carry portraits of Tangut donors and inscriptions in Tangut script. They had all been for some time in Khara Khoto, on Tangut territory, before they were sealed in the *suburgan*. They also became the subject of numerous imitations, some of which are easy enough to identify amongst the fourth group of pictures, representing the local, provincial school. This fourth group offers important keys to an understanding of the overall heterogeneity of the collection. What at first glance seems to be an extraordinary variety in the artefacts in the collection, and in the branches of Buddhism and artistic traditions with which they can be associated, might tempt one to conclude that it was the whim of fortune which brought them all together in the “Illustrious” *suburgan*.

Yet traces of all three of the ‘parent’ cultures can be found in the rather clumsy works of the local Khara Khoto artists. Some are clearly based on Chinese models, for example *Greeting the Soul of the Righteous Woman on the Way to the Pure Land of Amitābha* (Cat. No. 42) and *Guanyin, Moon in Water* (Cat. No. 48) and others on Tibetan, for example *Buddha* (Cat. No. 3). There are some even, in which the two influences combine.

Interestingly, nearly all the divinities and subjects represented in the works which acted as models, recur in the paintings of the local school: Amithāba, the ‘Pure Land’, Guanyin (Avalokiteśvara), Vaiśravaṇa, Acala, Mahākāla, Vajravārāhī, large compositions featuring the gods of the planets, and small horoscope-paintings. In some cases the iconography is faithfully reproduced, and in others iconographic detail is confused, as in the incorrect association of attributes *Yue Bo* (Cat. No. 58).

To fully understand the secondary quality of the works of the Khara Khoto artists requires first that we establish precisely the upper and lower dates of the whole collection, and if possible, put an exact date on individual paintings.

Dating the Collection

The dating “before 1227” is commonplace, since 1227 was the year in which Genghis Khan overran Khara Khoto. “Before 1227,” however, does not mean much, if we bear in mind that

the town survived until the end of the fourteenth century. The Tangut state survived for roughly 250 years, from 982 to 1227, and existed alongside the Khitan Liao dynasty (916-1124), the Northern Song (960-1126), the Southern Song (1127-1280) and the Jürchen Jin (1115-1264) – widely differing epochs in the history of Chinese culture. Political, commercial and military contacts, together with intermarriage, exposed the cultural and religious life of the Tangut state over the whole period of its existence to constant external influence.

Connections with Tibet, the widening influence of Tantrist art, and the conquest of Uighur territory – in particular, of Dunhuang and Khara Khoto – make possible the fairly precise dating of some of the Tibetan works in the collection.

The majority of the Chinese works can be safely dated to the twelfth century. Very few religious paintings on silk, analogous with the Khara Khoto paintings, have survived in China itself; this dating, therefore, is based predominantly on the historical context and information drawn from colophons to books from Khara Khoto, particularly those precisely dated specimens containing illustrations. Stylistic features also offer valuable clues – the shape and other details of the crown worn by the *bodhisattva*, the shape of the throne, the canopies of flowers, the ornaments, the palette etc. Catalogue entries mention these details. A small group of Chinese paintings and scrolls are of the eleventh century. They include the *Planet Deities* (Cat. No. 57). This dating is confirmed by another scroll, similar in composition, but much poorer in execution, a Liao dynasty work in the Wooden Pagoda in Shaanxi province, a reproduction of which was exhibited in the Beijing Historical Museum in 1987. The British Museum has a tenth century *tangka* of the same subject from Dunhuang.⁴⁶ The Planet Deities are depicted also in a twelfth century wall painting in the corridor of cave No. 61⁴⁷ at Dunhuang itself. The beings and attributes depicted in the Khara Khoto painting and that at Dunhuang are the same, but they differ in composition and in the iconography. The red-green coloration of the Khara Khoto painting is typical of Liao and Later Tang painting.

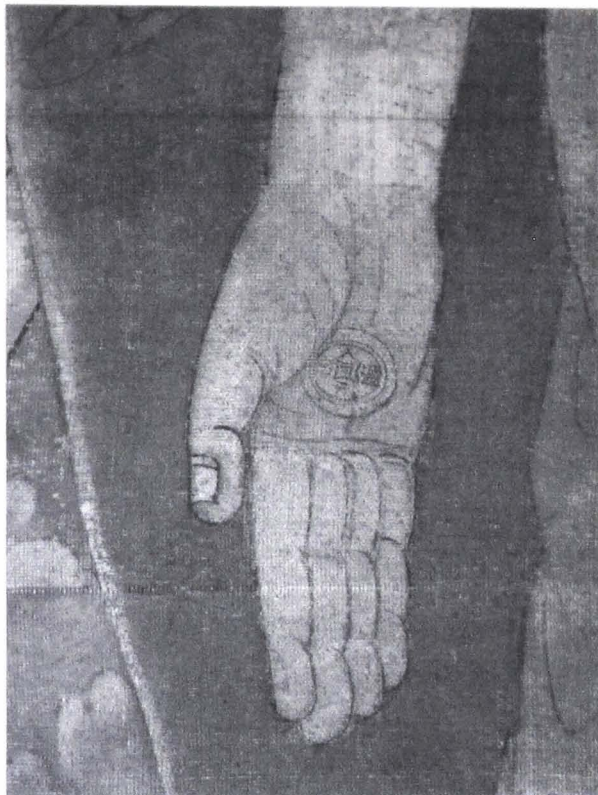
The *Samantabhadra* (Cat. No. 52),⁴⁸ mentioned above, with its female donors bearing the names Bai and Gao, may also be of the eleventh century. This dating can only be hypothetical, based, as it is, solely on the speculative assumption that the distinctively Tangut facial features of the figures in the painting most probably appeared in the period when the Tangut ac-

quired a sense of national identity, that is during the reign of Yuan-hao. Some indirect support for this dating is offered also by the inscriptions in the cartouches above the women's heads, which are in Chinese, not Tangut, suggesting that, at the time the scroll was painted, no Tangut writing was available.

Three other scrolls and *tangkas* can be dated: the *Mahāsthāmaprāpta* (Cat. No. 53) would appear to be of the middle to end of the thirteenth century, that is the end of the Southern Song and the beginning of the Yuan dynasty, and has a parallel in both colour and composition.⁴⁹ Interestingly, the way in which the pendants are attached to the crown in this scroll is the same as in the *Samantabhadra* (Cat. No. 52); this would indicate that the latter may also date from the thirteenth century. The *Kubera (Vaiśravaṇa)* (Cat. No. 55) is of still later date – the fourteenth century.

Only one painting in the collection can be dated with absolute certainty, the *Crowned Buddha* (Fig. 59). It is one of the clumsiest and crudest pieces in the exhibition, yet it has its own particular charm. In his hand the Buddha holds not the Wheel of the Law, but a coin bearing the imperial device of Tian-yuan, last emperor of the short-lived Northern Yuan dynasty (1378–1387), which was founded by the Mongols after they had been driven out of China, with Khara Khoto as its capital. The cruciform inscription on the coin reads: *Tian-yuan tung bao*. The iconography is the same as that of the clay statue of the *Crowned Buddha* (Cat. No. 60); unfortunately, however, the right hand of the statue is missing, so we cannot tell what it may have been holding. The Chinese and Central Asian art from Khara Khoto, then, embraces a period from the eleventh to the end of the fourteenth century, which coincides with the dating of the books and other documents, and with the lifespan of the town itself.

In 1914 academician S. F. Oldenburg wrote: "There remains the most difficult question of all – that of the period to which the icons should be assigned. Had Kozlov's collection consisted entirely of Tibetan icons, it would have been practically impossible to venture anything like a precise dating, so little has Tibetan icon-painting been studied hitherto. All we might tentatively propose is that the paintings date from before the fifteenth century, since they are entirely devoid of any allusions to the Yellow Hat sect and to Tsong-Kha-pa. Such a suggestion, however, like any *argumentum in silentio*, would be less than entirely convincing: there are, after all, no allusions in the images to



60. Detail. Bhaiṣajyaguru.
Cat. No. 7.



61. Portrait of a Monk.
Cat. No. 61.



the great teacher Padmasambhava – yet they were clearly painted after his time. Nor does their closeness to the Turfan frescos offer any firm evidence. Fortunately, the collection contains not just Tibetan, but also Chinese paintings, whose style is clearly that of the late Song, or in some cases perhaps the early Yuan dynasty. Their most likely date is the twelfth to thirteenth centuries; they may even be earlier, but they certainly cannot be later, than fourteenth century. “The Tibetan icons were,” Kozlov tells us,⁵⁰ “all found in the ‘Illustrious’ *suburgan*, and must, therefore, all share the same *terminus ad quem*. Undoubtedly, when we have read the books written in Tangut, and studied Tibetan iconography in more depth, we can expect to achieve a more precise dating.”⁵¹

The historical ties between the Tangut state and Tibet provides us with further clues to the dating of the paintings. In 1159 emissaries of the Karma-pa sect were received by the Tangut emperor Ren-xiao. It is likely that they brought with them two *tangkas* – *Cakrasaṃvara* and *Vajravārāhī*. In 1222 six monks of the 'Bri-khung-pa visited the Tangut state; and in 1255-1256 a monastery of the Karma-pa was founded on the border with the lands of the Miñag (Tangut), not far from Khara Khoto. *The Blue Annals* give further dates in the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries of missions to the Tanguts by famous Tibetan teachers, at a time when Mongols who had adopted Buddhism and had close contacts with various schools and monasteries began to take over Tangut territory.

We can be sure, then, that the Tibetan *tangkas* from Khara Khoto were painted no earlier than the middle of the twelfth century and up to the end of the fourteenth century.

The Khara Khoto Tangkas and Buddhist Sects

The monk-donors and teachers represented in the paintings belong to various Tibetan Buddhist sects; determining which sect is no easy matter. It is fairly certain that the lama in the black hat with a drawing of a double cross *vajra* in front of him (Fig. 60) is associated with the Black Hat Karma-pa sect. Most of the monks are painted with bare and shaven heads, often without attributes, including the teacher in the portrait (Fig. 61) – that is, as adepts of the Śākya school were customarily depicted under the Mongols. The Śākya-pa school was dominant in relations between the Mongols and Tibet, but Karma-pa, mTshal-pa and 'Bri-khung-pa also had their patrons among the ranks of the

Mongol nobility.” The books from Khara Khoto include a Tangut translation from the Tibetan of the *Hevajra-Tantra*, the most important text of the Śākya-pa.” Since we have no direct evidence in the form of inscriptions or names, and we know that at least four Buddhist sects were operative in the Tangut state, the sect of the monk in *Portrait of a Monk* (Fig. 28) must remain a mystery.

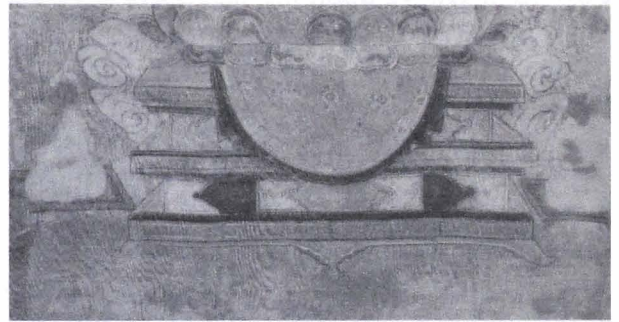
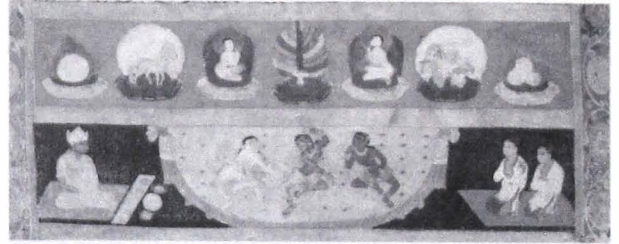
There were three *saṅghas* in the Tangut state, one Tangut, one Tibetan, and one Tangut-Chinese. Whether there was also a Tangut-Tibetan *saṅgha* is not yet known. The ordinary people did not have the right to wear red or yellow robes, though this right was enjoyed by monks and by high officials and their wives. Even so, a monk’s outer garment could not be yellow. A Superior wore red robes: those who wore yellow (undergarments) were ranked lower than those who wore red or purple.” The depiction of the monks in the paintings rarely complies. The *tangka Kurukullā* (Fig. 62) shows a lama in a white robe and a white hat of the same shape as those worn by the adherents of Black Hat Karma-pa (Fig. 60) and Red Hat Karma-pa.” Laid out before him are pieces of altar furniture. Opposite stand two female donors in two-piece dresses – a white blouse and a skirt. They are possibly Tibetan.

It is difficult to decipher the type of headdress worn by the monks sitting to each side of the throne of *Avalokiteśvara* (Fig. 63).

The figures are in a poor state of preservation; their facial features are obliterated, leaving only the facial outline and the brown colour of the skin discernible. They wear turbans, whose ends resemble ear-flaps but with the pointed top, characteristic of fourth to eighth century paintings in the Ajanṭā Caves.” Indian teachers in the Khara Khoto paintings, are usually painted with dark faces.

Donors

The Khara Khoto paintings contain many likenesses of Tangut donors, as well as monks. In the *Guanyin, Moon in Water* (Cat. No. 46), for example, to the lower right of the *bodhisattva* is a man holding a censer, and behind him a boy, both standing on a cloud (Fig. 65). To the left are musicians and dancers, two horses with fine trappings and a battle standard (Fig. 64). The man at prayer is dressed in a green robe decorated with gold dragon medallions; he has a black hat with ‘folded’ sides and



65. Detail Guanyin, Moon
in Water. *Cat. No. 46.*



66. Official and Servant. *Cat. No. 63.*



decorated at the centre front with a golden branch. The shape of the hat is highly reminiscent of that worn in a wall-painting portrait of the Emperor of Khitan Liao.⁵⁵ The Tanguts wear their hair in the *tufa* style, borrowed from the Khitan and popularised under the reforms introduced by Yuan-hao in 1033. In other works the Tanguts either have their hair loose, or are wearing hats. The dark coloured horse is protected by face armour and breastplate. The battle standard was a traditional symbol of military power amongst the peoples of Central Asia and the steppe nomads. In the corner of the painting is an open grave. Tangut funerals were accompanied by music and dancing; the horses were sacrificial offerings. The Tangut legal code of the late twelfth century twice mentions horse sacrifice; as sacred animals – together with bulls and milk-cows – they were, according to one article, sacrificed to the spirits of Heaven in the Old Imperial Palace. Another article expressly forbids sacrificing a horse to the dead.⁵⁶ The two are not contradictory, since they deal with different categories of sacrifice, one at the highest, imperial level, the other, mundane.

The scroll shows nothing illegal; the funeral is of a person of high estate. But who is he?

Kozlov brought from Khara Khoto a group portrait, now, unfortunately lost, though a photograph exists. Old inventories of the collection identify it as *Portrait of a Tangut Emperor* (Fig. 67). The emperor is at the centre, sitting on a chair and dressed in white clothes made of a fabric with a barely visible ring motif, and a hat very similar to the one mentioned above. To his right is a warrior of heroic appearance, wearing armour and an identical hat. To his left is a woman wearing an opulent dress with a typical Central Asian shoulder-piece. Surrounding them is their retinue, a falconer, a bowyer, and others whose attributes cannot be made out. In front of the emperor is a hound and other marks of wealth – ingots of silver, coins, resplendent jewels, horns containing medicines, pieces of coral, books, and so on – all of which commonly occur in the Khara Khoto engravings. At first glance it looks like a picture of a hunting party. The upper part of the picture, however, contains further mysteries: to the left, on a cloud, the central figure recurs, with his hands raised aloft, while in the centre, also on a cloud, is the warrior in armour, apparently strenuously pulling at something – possibly the cloud bearing the emperor. Is this then a hunting party? Is the central figure an emperor? Written sources, analogous compositions on the painted tombs of the Liao emperors, and wall



68. Detail. Amitābha Appearing
before Worshippers. Cat. No. 38.



69. Detail. Guanyin. Cat. No. 49.



paintings in cave No. 159 at Dunhuang dating from the period of the Tibetan conquest (eighth to ninth centuries) all point to the central figure being of imperial rank. Both in Tibet, whence the Tangut emerged, and in Central Asia, where they settled, white was traditionally the colour of the ruler's ceremonial attire. The Tangut emperor Yuan-hao wore a white robe. The upper part of the picture remains an enigma, but this is clearly not simply a portrait of an imperial hunting party. The picture as a whole must be of religious/ritualistic importance.

The *Official and Servant* (Fig. 66) also depicts a man of high estate in a robe with dragon medallion motifs, and wearing a hat similar to those described above. The hat has not only a decorative branch in the centre, but also a pattern based on some sort of plant along its edge. The central figure has a dog at his side and before him, attributes indicating wealth. Behind him stands a boy. The painted tombs of the Khitan emperors provide parallels with this composition also. In the portrait then, the emperor is in white; in the engraving (Fig. 66) traces of green paint are discernible; and in (Fig. 65) he is robed in green. We may speculate, therefore, that white robes were reserved for ceremonial occasions and had religious/ritualistic significance. According to Tangut law, only persons of high rank were permitted to wear green; dress decorated with the motif of a medallion enclosing a gold dragon was the prerogative of the emperor.

The costume and head-dress of three pairs of donors (Figs. 66, 68-70), indicate they were of high social standing, possibly even members of the imperial household. We should remember that the names of two women-donors (mother and daughter, or mother-in-law and daughter-in-law) are inscribed only on one painting (Fig. 35). Curiously, their names – Bai (White) and Gao (High) – echo the official name of the Tangut state – 'The White High Great State of Xia'."

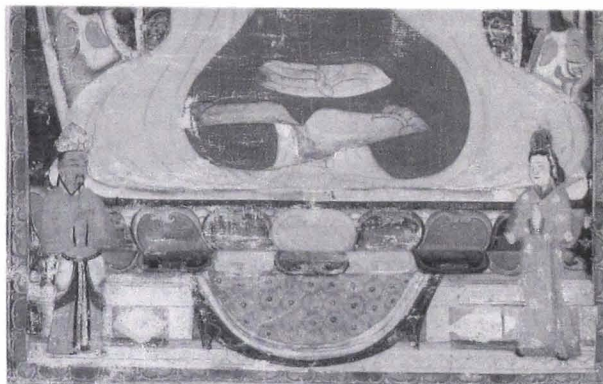
The donors in *Portrait of a Monk* (Fig. 37), a man dressed in red with a hat of now familiar type and a woman in a red dress with gold patterning, also belong, if not to the imperial family itself, then certainly to the court circle. Tangut law states: "It is not permitted for citizens of our country to wear military apparel and regalia with gilded ornamentation or woven with gold thread. The wives, daughters, daughters-in-law of relatives [of the emperor], the wives of high officials, equerries of the innermost palace chambers must all seek special permission to wear garments woven or decorated with gold."

There is a fascinating donor in the Taoist painting Xuan U (The Black Warrior) (Fig. 71). He has coarse facial features and a prominent snub nose; he is dressed for riding, with his wide trousers tucked into his boots; he has armour on his back and a scarf or collar of some sort over his shoulders; and he wears a kerchief wrapped round his head, with a vertical plate fixed at the rear. In his hand he is holding a board inscribed with Taoist invocations. Chinese sources tell us that the son of the emperor Yuan-hao "spent all his time in the mountains in the company of Taoist monks, acquired the discipline of strict fasting, and did nothing for days on end" – thus incurring the wrath of his father. "Pursuing his study of Taoist disciplines, he refrained from eating for a long time, and died."⁶⁴ Alas, we have no hard evidence which would allow us to identify the donor as the son of Yuan-hao, and his true identity must remain a mystery.

The Hermitage's Khara Khoto collection offers insights into medieval Chinese, Tibetan and Central Asian art, into the question of how such short-lived cultures as that of the Tangut arise, take shape and struggle to establish a unique and independent identity. The collection itself is remarkable and important, not only because there are few others like it in a comparable state of preservation, but because it opens whole new fields of study in iconography, style, and cultural history.

This exhibition contains almost half of the paintings in the Khara Khoto collection. We have naturally selected for display the finest works from an artistic point of view, or those in which style or iconography are of particular interest. We have also, of course, had to take into account the state of preservation of each work, for we are talking of paintings which lay undisturbed in the "Illustrious" *suburgan* for approaching seven hundred years.

As we get to know and understand these remarkable objects, so the artistic life of the Tangut springs to life before our eyes with a truly remarkable vividness and clarity. The geographical position of the Tangut Empire, the prevailing historical situation in Central Asia in the tenth to fourteenth centuries, the multiracial nature of Tangut society, the proximity of great national cultures (on the one hand the ancient culture of China, on the other the emerging culture of Tibet) were the factors which determined the variety and heterogeneity of the Tanguts' artistic aspirations and consequently of the treasures which were found in the "Illustrious" *suburgan*.



¹The term Silk Road is used here in a conventional manner. The silk road flourished during the Han-Tang dynasty. In the following centuries the main road between China and the West was a sea route, but merchant caravans continued to use the old traditional Silk Road.

²N.A. Nevsky, 1960, vol I, p. 82.

³*Ibid.*, 1960, p. 81.

⁴See also 'Donors'.

⁵M.L. Rudova, 1967, p. 197.

⁶"Illustrious" *suburgan* (*surburgan* is Mongolian for *stūpa*). The *stūpa* in which the Khara Khoto treasures were found is known by this name at the Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.

⁷Dr. M.I. Vorobyova-Desyatovskaya has studied in depth the Central Asian texts from the collection of the Institute of Oriental Studies in St. Petersburg, and the particularities of Central Asian Buddhism. See: M.I. Vorobyova-Desyatovskaya, 1991.

⁸See note 7.

⁹G.N. Roerich, 1949, p. 63.

¹⁰M.M. Rhie, 1991, p. 49.

¹¹Wang Zhong, 1962.

¹²G.N. Roerich, 1979, p. 486; H. Karmay, 1975, p. 42.

¹³G.N. Roerich, 1979, pp. 492, 501, 503.

¹⁴H. Karmay, *op. cit.*, 1975.

¹⁵G.N. Roerich, 1970, p. 502.

¹⁶See: article by M.L. Rudova in this catalogue.

¹⁷L.N. Menshikov, 1984, p. 102; E.I. Kychanov, 1987, p. 135.

¹⁸See: article by E.I. Kychanov in this catalogue.

¹⁹L.N. Menshikov, 1984, p. 82.

²⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 18-23.

²¹E.I. Kychanov, 1987, p. 143.

²²L.N. Menshikov, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

²³S.F. Oldenburg, 1914, p. 73.

²⁴The pantheon of deities in the Tibetan style *tangkas* was first examined by academician S.F. Oldenburg in *Materialy po buddiskoy ikonografii Khara Khoto. Oprazha tibetskogo pis'ma*, 1914. The fullness of his descriptions and the accuracy of his dating is remarkable. We therefore, simply copied Oldenburg's list. We have, however, slightly abridged it, since the pantheon is not fully represented in the exhibition.

²⁵The manuscript was discovered by S. E. Malov in Kansu and published, jointly with the academician V.V. Radlov, in *Bibliotheca Buddhica*.

²⁶S.F. Oldenburg, *op. cit.* p. 26.

²⁷Unfortunately, the *maṇḍala* of the planets, which corresponds to a surviving text, translated from Tangut into Russian by N.A. Nevsky, cannot be exhibited due to its poor state of conservation.

²⁸See: article by M.L. Rudova in this catalogue.

²⁹See: L. Chandra, 1961-1972, and M.T. de Mallman, 1975.

³⁰G. Tucci, 1961, p. 75.

³¹All manuscript numbers refer to the inventory numbers of the Manuscript Repository of the Institute of Oriental Studies, St. Petersburg.

³²A.P. Terentev-Katansky, 1981, p. 190 (TF 205).

³³M.M. Rhie and R.A.F. Thurman, 1991, p. 49.

³⁴A similar conclusion was drawn by the outstanding Russian specialist on Mongolia, A. Pozdnev. See: A. Pozdnev, 1887.

³⁵M.M. Rhie and R.A.F. Thurman, 1991, p. 48.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 1991, p. 342.

³⁷See: R. Whitfield, 1982-85.

³⁸G. Tucci, 1973, plate 124.

³⁹It is the view of M.M. Rhie that the mannered pose, emphasising the bending of the

body at the waist, the three-quarter face turn of the head, and the quite different treatment of eyes and mouth of the *Bodhisattva* in the temple at Ivang cannot be considered analogous to the Padmapāñi ('Wisdom and Compassion', p. 50). The scarf, draped horizontally and tied at the left shoulder, is found also in paintings in the temple of Alchi (Snellgrove & Skorupski, 1977, plate 65). The hairstyle, as M.M. Rhie has noted, is similar to those of the Pāla and Sena dynasties. The face and the manner of its depiction are strikingly reminiscent of paintings in the temple of Payathonzu, dating from the time of the Pagan culture in Burma (N. Oshegova, 1988, Plate 63). I personally would not connect the Hermitage's Padmapāñi directly with either the Alchi, or Burmese, *bodhisattvas*. It is far more likely that the two *bodhisattvas* from Khara Khoto were based on some entirely different prototype, or prototypes. Oldenburg commented: "the manner is Tibetan; the hand is that of a craftsman. The rich gold patterning of the central figure's dress seems to suggest also some Uighur influence."

⁴⁰See the commentary on this exhibit in the catalogue section.

⁴¹I admire M.M. Rhie's hypothesis regarding similarities between the Vajravārāhī and the sculpture of Orissa and Southern India, as I do her overall contribution to the study of the Khara Khoto *tangkas*, published in the catalogue to the exhibition 'Wisdom and Compassion'. The question of formative influences on the art of Central Tibet, and in particular those of the cultures of the Pāla and Sena dynasties, Nepal, Orissa and Southern India is one which deserves much further study. This question, however, lies outside our study of the Tangut.

⁴²See: E.I. Kychanov's article on the three Buddhist *saṅghas* in this catalogue.

⁴³H. Karmay, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

⁴⁴S.F. Oldenburg, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

⁴⁵Referred to as Guanyin by M.L. Rudova.

⁴⁶R. Whitfield, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pl. 27.

⁴⁷Dunhuang Study Institute numbering.

⁴⁸See note 37.

⁴⁹Xu Shenyu, *Hua fan duoying*, Beijing, 1955, pl. 18.

⁵⁰Kozlov, for whatever reason, is wrong. His first finds, sent by post from Khara Khoto to St. Petersburg, and including the twelfth century portrait of a monk – which Oldenburg described in print as early as 1909 – were found, not in the "Illustrious" *suburgan* (which he had still not discovered), but inside the walls of the town.

⁵¹S. F. Oldenburg, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

⁵²D.L. Snellgrove, 1968, p. 149.

⁵³Tangut Manuscripts, 1963 (Cat. No. 326).

⁵⁴E.I. Kychanov, 1982, pp. 30, 40, 48, 49.

⁵⁵M.M. Rhie and R.A.F. Thurman, *op. cit.* (Cat. Nos. 87, 90).

⁵⁶R. Alkazi, 1983, p. 182, plate 192.

⁵⁷The form of hat worn by the Khitan Liao Emperor was in its turn copied from the everyday head-wear of the Tang Emperors, with which we are familiar from the tomb paintings as well as from non-religious paintings (see: Jitsuzo Tamura, 1977, pl. 16).

⁵⁸E.I. Kychanov, 1988, p. 436; 1989, IV, p. 177.

⁵⁹See E.I. Kychanov's article in this volume.

⁶⁰E.I. Kychanov, 1988, p. 361.

⁶¹E.I. Kychanov, 1968, p. 295.

The Chinese style paintings from Khara Khoto

Maria L. Rudova

The collection of some two hundred paintings, brought back by P.K. Kozlov from Khara Khoto, was first subjected to systematic analysis by S.F. Oldenburg. He considered only a part of the collection to be in the Tibetan style; the remainder he saw as having been strongly influenced by Chinese art and culture. Yet despite this apparently clear division, the Chinese paintings from Khara Khoto are themselves extremely varied. Each image demands careful individual study, especially in the search for analogies both in subject matter, and as regards iconographic and stylistic detail. Particular difficulties are presented by certain unique images such as the representations of *Guanyin* (Cat. Nos. 48, 49), and *Kubera (Vaiśravaṇa)* (Cat. No. 55) in which the central deity is surrounded by attendant figures, who cannot be traced in other works in the collection or in available secondary sources. The poor state of preservation of many items in the collection, among them *Buddha Śākyamuni Preaching the Prajñāpāramitā* (Cat. No. 4) presents another obstacle to interpretation. It should be added that grouping the paintings according to style and technique leaves many aspects of the complex iconography of these works unexplored: it offers, for instance, no insights into the origins, significance and social role of the various Buddhist cults in the Tangut State; nor does it even pose, let alone answer, the question of Tangut Buddhism as a distinctive branch of the faith.

As scholars from S.F. Oldenburg onwards have noted, Tangut Buddhism, like the Tangut Empire itself, developed under the shadow of China and Tibet.¹ Kychanov's research confirms this: "Xi Xia was a multiracial state; for this reason there was considerable ethnic diversity – Tangut, Tibetan and Tangut-Chinese – in its religious communities."² Squeezed as it was between two states in which religious institutions and practices – including Buddhism – were so highly developed, the Tangut Empire could not but be affected by both China and Tibet in the formation of its own Buddhist state religion. The influence of these two powerful neighbours is immediately apparent in the iconography of the Buddha Amitābha, who was, to judge by the large proportion of Amitābha images in the Khara Khoto collection, the subject of a considerable cult.

The Chinese style Amitābha

The Chinese style paintings from Khara Khoto clearly demonstrate that the finest Amitaist works – from an artistic point of

view – were created under the direct influence of Chinese art of the Song dynasty (1126-1279), the period when relations between China and the Tangut Empire were at their peak.

Mahāyāna Buddhism, based on the idea of universal salvation, reached its final stage of development in the twelfth century. Spreading throughout Central Asia, it had, assumed distinctive local and national forms as early as the ninth century. The belief of the rebirth of the righteous in the 'Pure Land' of Amitābha became central to all Buddhists and replaced the idea of *nirvāṇa*. It was well within the reach of ordinary men to fulfill the simple vows required to hope for rebirth in the Pure Land.

The chief agent through whom this desired rebirth might be achieved was the great *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara known in China as Guanyin.

He was cast as the protector of all believers, and a deity from whom help might be sought in all times of need; this undoubtedly accounted for his huge popularity throughout the Buddhist world of Central Asia and the Far East.

Of the individual Amitābha images, it is the *Amitābha Appearing before Worshipers* (Cat. No. 38) which is closest to the Song tradition. The subtlety of palette and exquisite drawing would place this in the highest rank of Song painting. The elegant gold ornamentation of the Buddha's cloak, with its depictions of a dragon and a phoenix and its edging of flowering peonies, is clearly taken from Chinese models.

Another work which must be attributed to the hand of a Chinese artist is the *Greeting the Soul of the Righteous Man on the Way to the Pure Land of Amitābha* (Cat. No. 39). This painting is equally distinguished for its subtlety of colour and line. The positioning of the Buddha and *bodhisattvas* in different planes creates an illusion of depth, enhanced by the background of plain, unpainted silk.

The figures, depicted strictly according to the iconographic canon, generate a sense of tranquillity, which heightens the solemnity of the occasion.

The scroll painting of the same subject (Cat No. 40), while sharing the same composition and subject, reveals many quite different features. The basis of its composition is the diagonal, which conveys a sense of the impartibility of earth and sky. This was a standard technique in Southern Song landscape painting, based on the Taoist philosophy of the universality of nature as an expression of 'Tao'.³ Moreover, it is apparent that the figures of the deities were executed by a painter – probably a

Tangut – who, while no doubt having in mind Chinese treatments of the same subject, was not familiar with all aspects of this iconographic canon. The haloes, gestures (*mudrās*) and positions (*āsanas*) of both *bodhisattvas* are not as they should be, and the dress of the *bodhisattva* Guanyin (Avalokiteśvara) is treated in singularly arbitrary fashion: his ‘pauper’s’ cloak, for instance, exposes his upper back. The dress of the Buddha, for all its ornamentation and the beautifully handled heavy folds of the cloak, is encumbered with extraneous lines.

The scene *Greeting the Soul of the Righteous Man on the Way to Pure Land* (Cat. No. 39) is an example of a rebirth scene produced for the common consumer. On the other hand, catalogue number 40 was clearly a votive painting with its portrait-like depiction of the dead man, sitting beneath a pine tree, and then his rebirth as a naked infant, ready to mount the lotus throne proffered by the *bodhisattvas* as the Buddha Amitābha’s recognition of his righteous life.

The Pure Land of Amitābha and Bhaiṣajyaguru with Seven Companions (Cat. No. 43) shows the Buddha and two *bodhisattvas* seated not on lotus thrones, but on stylised living long-stemmed lotuses, growing in a pool in the ‘Pure Land’. This motif can be traced back to the very beginnings of Chinese Buddhist art, and thence to Indian pre-Buddhist beliefs. The rich floral ornamentation of the Buddha’s cloak is a Chinese symbol of nobility. Some formal indications of this painting’s non-Chinese origins, on the other hand, are the uniplanar treatment of the deities, fabric background instead of vacant space, and the Tibetan style of the eight ‘Healing Buddha’ figures at the top of the image. Combined elements of two cults in one painting should not surprise us; as early as the tenth century there are, among the votive banners at Dunhuang,⁴ paintings combining the cults of the two *bodhisattvas* Guanyin (Avalokiteśvara) and Dizang.⁵ Given the closeness of the two cults, this is not difficult to explain. Alongside the Buddha Amitābha, his two *bodhisattvas* and the dead believers, this Khara Khoto painting (Cat. No. 43) also illustrates the cult of the Buddha who cares for our physical well-being. In China this cult of the Buddha as Lord of Healing or Medicine Buddha, appeared relatively late, in paintings at Dunhuang only from the time of the Sui dynasty – the late seventh century. The Tang dynasty (618-906) produced grandiose depictions of the Paradise of the Lord of Healing, rivalling in their opulence those of Amitābha and Maitreya. In China, however, this particular cult rapidly declined to the point of extinc-

tion. We may assume then that in the Buddhist iconography of the Song period the ‘Healing Buddha’ hardly figured and was replaced by the Taoist health-protecting deities, whose cults were already well established in China. This may then serve to explain why we see, on a ‘Chinese’ image of Amitābha, ‘Healing Buddhas’ painted in the Tibetan style. Amongst the ‘Tibetan’ works from Khara Khoto, however, there are some quite magnificent *tangkas* of this cult, testifying to its continuing vitality in both Tibet and the Tangut state.

The ‘Chinese style’ paintings from Khara Khoto, while retaining the iconography of the Southern Song, were undoubtedly executed locally. They indicate a specific shift which occurred in Chinese Amitaism. In place of the large, densely populated compositions depicting the ‘Pure Land’ of Amitābha, with fine palaces, orchestras and glittering retinues – of which there are abundant examples at Dunhuang from the Tang period (618-907 A.D.) – there emerges a simpler imagery of the Buddha Amitābha and his two escorting *bodhisattvas*. The composition now includes musical instruments as symbols of ‘the Earth’, and a pool for the righteous dead. The most significant innovation, however, was the dedication of whole compositions to the scene of Amitābha and his two escorting *bodhisattvas* meeting the dead believer on his way to the ‘Pure Land’. This scene occurs in paintings at Dunhuang from the seventh century, but it was in the Southern Song period that it first acquired its own resonance as the iconographic embodiment, not of the general concept of salvation, but of the possibility of salvation and rebirth for a specific individual. With this began the tradition of paintings which include a portrait of the dead believer.⁶ Setting the Khara Khoto compositions alongside their counterparts from the Korean Koryo dynasty in the twelfth century, or the Japanese Heian (12th century) and Kamakura (13th century) periods, we see that this shift in Amitaism was common throughout the Far East.

Bodhisattva Guanyin

The cult of Amitābha is closely connected with that of the great *bodhisattva* Guanyin (Avalokiteśvara). Guanyin began to acquire independent cult status in China from the seventh century. Numerous depictions of the deity are found in wall paintings and votive banners at Dunhuang, as well as in prayer-notes, on which a prayer for help and protection was printed together

with a picture of the deity. The cult of Guanyin (Avalokiteśvara) was equally prevalent in Tibet and Central Asia; with it went wide distribution of the *Lotus sūtra*, and especially of its twenty fifth chapter – separately published – which recounts the *bodhisattva*'s acts of compassion, protection of ordinary people and help in times of misfortune. The cult of Guanyin (Avalokiteśvara) enjoyed wide currency also in the Tangut state of Xi Xia.² The exhibition includes three examples of Guanyin in 'Pure Moon, Reflected in Water form', which are iconographically identical though differing in some details and in their general level of artistry (Cat. Nos. 46-48). Another *Guanyin* (Cat. No. 49) is executed in the 'picturesque-sculptural' manner. *Guanyin, Moon in Water* (Fig. 76) is distinguished for its vividness, its fine use of line, and the richness of its palette. The bright blue rock and the pink and red peonies surrounding the figure of the deity are, just like the clothing and hair of the soul, taken straight from the copybooks of the Chinese masters of the Southern Song period. The figure of the *bodhisattva* himself radiates elegance and ease. All this, in conjunction with the diagonal basis of the composition and the generally high level of artistic skill, allows us to date it to the Southern Song period. It was painted locally, on commission, by a highly professional artist. The dead man, standing on a cloud in the bottom left corner of the painting, was without question a Tangut. The artist has clearly striven to achieve a good likeness of the man's face, as in a portrait, and dressed him in a tall embroidered hat and a gown decorated with golden medallions. In the bottom right corner, on a spit of dry land, is a group of Tanguts playing musical instruments at the graveside. Music played a role in state ceremonies and religious rituals in the Tangut Empire, and therefore provides a fitting accompaniment to the solemn moment when the soul of the righteous man stands at the 'Gates of Paradise'. The soul of the dead man would normally be greeted by the Buddha Amitābha and the two *bodhisattvas*. Here his place is taken by one of Buddha's escorts, the *bodhisattva* Guanyin (Avalokiteśvara).

In the tenth century, paintings of Guanyin appear at Dunhuang in the form of 'Guide of Souls', in which the function of the *bodhisattva* is to illuminate the path of the Righteous Man to the 'Pure Land' of Amitābha. Moreover, in prayers mainly found in esoteric images of Guanyin, alongside requests for earthly favours, there are also appeals for dead relatives to be found a place in the Pure Land. *Guanyin, Moon in Water* (Cat. No. 46)



is unique among images of Guanyin. Here the *bodhisattva* is perceived in his function of 'Guide of Souls' – not just leading the souls of the dead along the way to the 'Pure Land' of Amitābha; instead, he has become the central deity, to whom one appeals for rebirth in the Pure Land.

The Guanyin represented in catalogue number 40 has a wooden sculpture of the deity at its centre, accompanied by attendant figures and two female donors. The attributes of the central figure betray some iconographical confusion (Fig. 73): his crown, quite conventionally, carries an image of the Buddha Amitābha, but in his right hand is a book – normally associated with the *bodhisattva* Wen shu (Mañjuśrī). His throne bears the image of an elephant – an attribute of Pu 'hien (Samantabhadra). The attendant figure with his hands together in prayer is one of the ten kings of the underworld Yangluo wang. The other is the monk Daoming heshang carrying a bundle of records of the dead. These attendant figures are normally the escorts of the great

bodhisattva Dizang. This latter deity traditionally watched over the dead, steering them away from the six paths to rebirth and on the way to the 'Pure Land' of Amitābha. This unique iconographical confusion reflects the stage where several closely related deities and their attributes were beginning to merge into a single, dominant figure. Guanyin (Avalokiteśvara) achieved precisely such dominance in late Amitaist Buddhism throughout Central Asia. The composition is painted with great artistic talent. The harmony of the palette is particularly striking. The inscriptions indicate that it was commissioned by a woman from a wealthy Chinese family called Bai, and a bride from a family called Gao. It is tempting to suppose that a mother and her daughter-in-law commissioned the painting to mark the marriage and to request to the deity for the gift of a son. In China it was the son who traditionally officiated rituals of ancestor-worship. Their request for a son might therefore have included an appeal for rebirth in the 'Pure Land'.*



Chinese and Tibetan influence on Tangut painting

Besides Chinese style Amitaist icons, the Khara Khoto collection contains works classified by Oldenburg as "icons in the Tibetan style." This group includes the two exhibits *The Pure Land of Amitābha* (Cat. Nos. 44, 45). Both are compositionally identical to *The Pure Land of Amitābha and Bhaiṣajyaguru with Seven Companions* (Cat. No. 43) mentioned previously, except for the depiction of the eight 'Healing Buddha' figures. Setting these three 'Pure Land' compositions side by side clearly reveals the way that local Tangut versions of the theme took shape. If, in *The Pure Land of Amitābha* (Cat. No. 44) the Tibetan elements seem somehow alien, which is very apparent if one compares the two-dimensional and static treatment of the Buddha figure with the treatment of the lotus rising from the pool, Tibetan and Chinese elements have on the other hand, been integrated to create a specifically Tangut interpretation of the subject in and the painting of the same subject (Cat. No. 45). Thus, for instance, the 'living' Chinese lotus on which the deities are seated is treated in a distinctive way: the upper flowers represent lotus thrones; between the figures of the *bodhisattvas* all that can be seen is the decorative edging round the pool and a lotus bud, where there should be the reborn souls of the righteous lying at rest. The 'living' leaves and flowers of the lotus are reduced to schematic designs serving only to fill space. The *bodhisattva* figures appear in a lower position, thus endowing the whole image with a uniformly static and two-dimensional appearance. Compositional harmony is ensured by the acanthus leaves, which replace the customary musical instruments and fill the composition's upper border and corners. The light floral fabric of the background sets off nicely the overall bright colour scheme of the painting.

The general impression created is that local painters, evolving their own versions of the 'Pure Land' theme, drew on both Chinese and Tibetan models, preserving only their fundamental and indispensable compositional elements and iconography (posture, gesture etc.). The existence of these works also confirms that Amitaism was a general cult among the Tangut.

Elements which are characteristic of the local style such as areas of flat, vivid colour, fabric background, static and two-dimensional composition are also found in three paintings of the theme *Greeting the Soul of the Righteous Man on the Way to the Pure Land of Amitābha* (Cat. Nos. 39-41) and in *Guanyin, Moon*

in Water (Cat. No. 47). In the paintings described in catalogue number 40 the large figures of the deities occupy practically the whole of the relatively small canvas. The deities are not seen against an infinite expanse of sky, but have descended on brightly coloured clouds to the tiny figure of the dead man. The figure of the Buddha is set off by an orange *mandorla*, enhancing its monumental quality. In the top left corner, musical instruments and a small Chinese pavilion atop pink clouds symbolise the celestial halls of the 'Pure Land'.

The two *Guanyin, Moon in Water* images (Cat. Nos. 46, 47) are identical in composition, but bear different meanings. Catalogue number 47 has, in its bottom right corner, two figures at prayer: one is dressed as a Chinese official, the other has a curious, monkey-like face and a bare torso (Fig. 75). The first is the famous Tang monk and traveller Xuan-zang, who went to India in search of sacred Buddhist writings. Legend has it that he had a monkey as companion. I have discovered that both these figures are drawn from a *shi hua*, the popular version of the tale of Xuan-zang's journey to India. The *shi hua* was published in China in the Southern Song period, and enjoyed enormous popularity.⁴ The Tangut painter presumably did not fully understand the actual nature of the two figures and interpreted them in his own way. It is not by chance that the famous traveller and his companion appear in a Guanyin composition. One of the good deeds traditionally associated with Guanyin was his patronage and protection of travellers.⁴⁰

The *Buddha* (Cat. No. 3), *Greeting the Soul of the Righteous Woman on the Way to the Pure Land of Amitābha* (Cat. No. 42), *Guanyin, Moon in Water* (Cat. No. 48) and the *Kubera* (Cat. No. 56), constitute a charming group of crude popular works, painted by local artists. All show poor draftsmanship and somewhat naive application of colour. The painters have not infringed iconographic tradition, but simply added elements of their own. Thus in *Greeting the Soul of the Righteous Woman on the Way to the Pure Land of Amitābha* (Cat. No. 42), a tree has been added in the distance in an attempt to create perspective, while in *Guanyin, Moon in Water* (Cat. No. 48), the bamboo beneath which the *bodhisattva* is usually seated, and the surrounding peonies, are replaced by modest flora, presumably from the surrounding countryside. These images were probably more affordable for common people.

Vaiśravaṇa, Lord of the North (also known as Kubera) and Jambhala, gods of riches, are two of the 'Eight Awesome Dei-



ties' (Dharmapāla), who themselves belong to the group of Protector Deities in the hierarchy of Northern Buddhism. This category is immediately inferior to the great *bodhisattvas*. Vaiśravaṇa (one of the *lokapālas*) is the only one of the four Lords of the Corners of the Earth who is worshipped independently, as the god of war, and defender of the borders of the state against enemy incursion." In the guise of Kubera he is seen also as a protector from evil and sickness, and a god of riches. The *Kubera* (*Vaiśravaṇa*) (Cat. No. 55) is unique, its fine line and exquisite palette testifying to the professional skills of an artist clearly well versed in the techniques of Chinese painting. Kubera, a god of health, strength and fertility, dates back to Indian pre-Buddhist mythology. The cult of Kubera and his subordinate *yakṣas* corre-

sponds to cosmologies involving either four, or eight corners of the universe; he is also a preserver of wealth and a protector against evil. Images of Kubera are relatively rare in China, where the roles of gods of health and fertility are played by other, local deities, usually connected with the cult of nature and Taoism. This Kubera painting is, therefore, of great academic interest, particularly in view of its remarkably full retinue of attendant figures in the form of Kubera's sons and *yakṣas*, the protectors of riches.

Equally remarkable is another group of minor figures – gods of fertility, health and riches, whose complex iconography includes elements drawn from Indian pre-Buddhist beliefs as well as later Chinese Buddhism.

One of the Tibetan style *tangkas*, revealing strong Indian and Nepalese iconographic influences, is worth singling out for particular comment – the *Teaching Buddha Śākyamuni* (Cat. No. 5).¹² It is beautifully drawn, displaying high levels of professional skill. Its painter, working in the Indo-Nepalese tradition, has achieved an exceptional unity of style and palette. Yet this masterpiece of Tibetan art was in all likelihood painted in the Tangut state of Xi Xia. This hypothesis hangs on a single detail – the depiction of the Buddhist canon in the form of both Chinese scrolls and Tibetan books. The painter was clearly familiar with the particularities of bookbinding in both China and Tibet – something most likely to have occurred in the Tangut state. In other respects this composition falls into one group alongside the *The Pure Land of Amitābha* paintings (Cat. Nos. 44, 45) and the *Buddha Śākyamuni Preaching the Prajñāpāramitā* (Cat. No. 4). In all four the treatment of the faces of the Buddha and *Bodhisattvas* is identical: fine, undulating eyebrows, half-closed eyes contained within a semicircular line, and thick, 'protruding' lips. Headwear and dress are all in the Nepalese-Tibetan style. These common features enable us to link these *tangkas* with the Central Tibetan school of painting, which was itself influenced by India and Nepal.

For an understanding of Buddhism in the Tangut Empire, however, it is the depictions of the 'lesser' deities – the guardians of the faith and protectors against misfortune and sickness – which are particularly interesting as iconographic models of esoteric Buddhism. These are: *Sitātapatrā* (Cat. No. 24), *Vighnāntaka* (Cat. No. 30), *Acala* (Cat. Nos. 31, 32), and *Kubera* (Cat. No. 56).¹³ They were either used as an aid to meditation, or, more correctly, reflected the very process of meditation. The

five *Ḍhyānibuddhas*, who in a *maṇḍala* compose the body of the universe and are placed in the five celestial spheres (centre, west, east, north, south), occupy the top row in all these icons. The bottom row is occupied by the five *ḍākinīs*, who, together with the *Ḍhyānibuddhas*, symbolise the polarity of male and female. Both horizontal rows had a specific role to play in the meditative process. In *Acala* (Cat. No. 32) the figure of the central deity is repeated, with identical attributes, at all four corners of the central canvas, to catch and eliminate the unbeliever. The *ḍākinīs* bearing sacrificial gifts at the base of the composition may have been intended to represent the altar, upon which would be placed gifts to the deity. In the two bottom corners are meditating monks, who, judging by their hats, are of high rank. What we appear to have here is a sort of truncated *maṇḍala*, containing various elements of, or conditions for, meditation: particularly remarkable are the allusions to real activities which might occur in a Buddhist temple – the offering of gifts, and monks meditating. In the other depiction of *Acala* (Cat. No. 31) the sacrificial gifts on the suppositional altar remain, but there are no *ḍākinīs*. *Kubera* (Cat. No. 56) has the same general composition, but neither sacrificial gifts nor *ḍākinīs*. The icon of *Sitātāpatrā* (Cat. No. 24) has all the components except the five *Ḍhyānibuddhas*.

Taking this group of works as a whole, it appears that a complete set of compositional elements was not considered essential by either painter or believer. The depictions preserved their function as stereotyped formulae without adhering rigidly in every detail to a given compositional pattern. Further evidence of this is offered by the unique xylograph of *Mahākālā-Vighnāntaka* in the Khara Khoto collection (Cat. No. 30). In addition to all the components mentioned above, it contains a bilingual inscription in Sanskrit and Chinese, and two slogans, written in large Chinese hieroglyphs: "Long live the Emperor, Peace to our State, and Tranquility to the People." The content of these slogans leads one to assume that such xylographs were commonplace, and that the cult of Mahākālā-Vighnāntaka had the status of a state religion in the Tangut Empire.

L.N. Menshikov's study of Chinese documents in the Khara Khoto collection has produced results which go further to support this hypothesis. Menshikov concludes that "the dominant branch of Buddhism in Xi Xia combined elements of the doctrine of the 'Pure Land' (or Amitaism) and Tantrism. This combination is much closer to Tibetan Buddhism than Chinese.

This makes possible the assertion that the Tangut populace, including even the Chinese amongst them, were much more closely tied to the Tibetan tradition. At the same time there is no denying the links with China, the source of so many Buddhist texts...."¹⁴

In addition to the paintings, the Khara Khoto collection contains fascinating items of what might be called pictorial propaganda material. Each of these pictures is designed to bring home the message about what punishments await the sinner who fails to fulfil his vows. Greed was one of the 'Ten sins' for which a sinner incurred punishment. The *Sinner Preta* (Cat. No. 37) was punished for his greed by feeling perpetual hunger. Avarice – another form of greed – was manifested in the meagreness of charitable donations to a Buddhist monastery.

The *Double-Headed Buddha* sculpture (Cat. No. 1) is an illustration of a legend, well-known from the tales of the famous Tang monk Xuan-zang. Two poor believers asked a sculptor to make them each a statue of the Buddha. The sculptor considered that the money they were offering was enough for only one statue. When they received it, the two believers lamented that they could not now fulfil all the vows they had made to the Buddha – whereupon the Buddha worked a miracle, turning the one image of himself into two. To these vivid 'aids to belief' we may add the prayer sheet *San zi jing*, which consists of a series of morally instructive phrases, each of three hieroglyphs."

The text runs from right to left, top to bottom:

- 1) [Missing]
- 2) Do not cross a strong man, nor confront him.
- 3) Do not act, using force.
- 4) Pay heed to sincere words.
- 5) Do not slander, do not be jealous.
- 6) Reduce [the number of] the mean and greedy.
- 7) Eliminate drunkenness and debauchery.
- 8) Eradicate cunning.
- 9) Accumulate [good] deeds, which a man should do.
- 10) Join others in social affairs.
- 11) [From the] beginning and [until the] end [of life], retain filial respect.
- 12) Do not break promises.
- 13) Remember widows and orphans.
- 14) Help the hungry and the poor.
- 15) Be steadfast in the faith.



75. Physiognomy Diagram with numbers. Verso. Cat. No. 70.

76. Physiognomy Chart with text. Verso. Cat. No. 70.



- 16) Do not kill living [creatures].
- 17) From the mercy of the Emperor.
- 18) You shall receive happiness.
- 19) By following in your deeds that [which is written here].
- 20) You may rise in rank.

Each day, before dawn, repeat [this text] constantly to yourself, from seven to a hundred times, and by this all your sins and misfortunes will be eliminated, and your sons and grandsons will prosper in happiness, wealth and rank.¹⁶

Non-religious Works

The Khara Khoto collection contains also non-Buddhist items which, though fewer in number, are no less impressive. They include *Portrait of a Monk* (Cat. No. 61), *Physiognomy Chart* (Cat. No. 70) – a perforated cartoon¹⁷ with a text in Tangut cursive script on the theory of physiognomy (Fig. 4), the xylograph *Official and servant* (Cat. No. 63), and two prints which are not included in the exhibition.¹⁸ This wide range of artefacts all help in some measure to fill in blank pages in the history of Chinese Song culture (960-1279).

For many centuries the art of portrait painting in China has centred upon the ritual portrait placed on the altar of an ancestor as a part of the cult of ancestor worship. The theoretical basis of this genre was 'physiomanry', which taught that a man's fate was determined by his facial features. An abstract portrait was compiled to correspond to a specific diagrammatic plan of the face. Such plans in turn were devised according to, for instance, the theory of the five elements, or the signs of the zodiac, or the six heavenly bodies, or the five sacred mountains etc. – each school of 'physiomanry' having its own set of facial plans and its own terminology. In the Khara Khoto text the terminology used in the diagrams is something of a blend, which does not derive from any single one of the theories mentioned above. Some of the traits and qualities alluded to are of particular interest, in that they were normally associated in China with the bureaucratic hierarchy: noble birth (1, 2, 3, 12, 15), high position (3, 13, 14), longevity (2); while an abundance of sons and grandsons (15, 16) was clearly connected with the cult of ancestor worship (Fig. 76).¹⁹

The Tangut, of course, in shaping the institutions of their own independent state, were bound to adopt many of the long estab-

lished structures of their Chinese neighbours. Their administrative system was borrowed in its entirety. As Nevsky noted: "...the Tangut needed Confucianism if only to teach their rulers how to rule and their subjects how to obey".²⁰ Kychanov has shown that Confucianism in the Tangut State was an official state doctrine which enjoyed the protection of the law.

It may be that perforated cartoons were used for the production of works of high artistic quality, such as the *Portrait of a Nobleman* (Fig. 78; Cat. No. 62). The faces in *Physiognomy Chart* (Cat. No. 70) and the portrait are very similar in form, for instance, in the three-quarter turned head, and the close detailing of facial bone structure. Moreover, the rigidly lined definition of the wrinkles on the forehead, the bridge of the nose, the hollows of the eyes and the folds of the cheeks corresponds closely in both general configuration and topographical detail to that on the drawing. The Khara Khoto portrait has analogies in the portraits of five old men from the Sui-yang region of Honan Province.²¹ Each picture carries an inscription with the name, age and title of the subject, which warrants their being described as official portraits. As James Cahill's commentary²² on the portraits suggests, they may have been painted during the lifetime, or shortly after the death, of the subjects, and apparently in connection with some significant personal event. The similarities both in outward appearance and in the artistic treatment of the faces of the five old men, as well as between them and the Khara Khoto portrait, is quite striking. The old man depicted (Fig. 77) is particularly like the figure in the Khara Khoto portrait. Cahill also remarks on the fact that although the faces are treated in a very formal, or rigid manner, they still bear the mark of spirituality, and their clothing is beautifully executed. In summary then, we may conclude that all these portraits were painted on the basis of 'physiomanry', and that we may apply the term 'official portrait' also to the work from Khara Khoto. The group of portraits of donors in the Khara Khoto collection should also be seen as non-Buddhist elements in the works. The manner in which they are painted is based on a quite different concept of portrait-painting, having its roots in the theory of man's essential spirituality which underpinned Chinese art of the fourth to fifth centuries. They are painted with varying degrees of skill, in a variety of dress, with a variety of hairstyles, yet all with distinctive facial features. Taken together, they admirably convey the ethnic and social mix in Tangut society. They also bear witness to the fact that the Tangut sense of national

77. Portrait of Wang Huan. *China*,
Northern Sung Dynasty, 11th
century. Colour and ink on silk:
39.3 × 31.7 cm (Acc. No. 48.10).
Courtesy of the Freer Gallery
of Art, Smithsonian Institution,
Washington D.C.



78. Portrait of a Nobleman.
Cat. No. 62.



identity had reached a level where they could understand and borrow the theoretical bases of Chinese portraiture. The Khara Khoto pictures are of enormous value for research in the field of Central Asian portraiture as a whole.

The xylograph *Official and Servant* (Cat. No. 63) – a small scroll depicting a rich man surrounded by attributes of wealth and rank – belongs in both format and subject to the genre of paper pictures (*zhi hua*) conveying good wishes. They were in use in China as early as the Song period (960-1279), though none have survived. Experts consider them to be the forerunners of the New Year pictures known as *nian hua*, which were commonplace in nineteenth century China. In the Khara Khoto print the patterned hat and the green gown decorated with a circular pattern – clearly not a Chinese dress – indicate that it was produced in the Tangut state, and that the Tanguts too used symbols of rank, wealth and official career to convey good wishes.

On the basis of this study of the Chinese style paintings from Khara Khoto, it is now possible to supplement Oldenburg's assertion that: "from a historical point of view, the Tibetan group of icons from Khara Khoto represents a vital link between the Indian icon-painting tradition and the later Tibetan tradition of the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries."²² The Khara Khoto collection also represents a link between late Chinese Buddhism and the syncretic religion which developed in China in the Song period, and lasted right through until the nineteenth century. As for Central Asia, this was the final evolutionary stage of Buddhism prior to Islamisation.

Our general conclusion, based on a study of these works, would therefore be that they represent the final stage in the evolution of pre-Mongol painting, and reflect in their style the varying Buddhist traditions of India, Nepal, Tibet, Central Asia and China.

¹S.F. Oldenburg, 1914, Foreword and Afterword.

²E.I. Kychanov, 1982, pp. 28-62.

³As we shall see, this feature of Southern Song painting is abandoned by the Tangut painters.

⁴The world famous Buddhist cave monastery near the town of Dunhuang in Gansu Province functioned from the fourth to the fourteenth century A.D. Its paintings trace clearly the evolution of Buddhism in China.

⁵Dizang was the Chinese version of the 'Medicine Buddha'.

⁶My theory of the switch from 'general' to 'individual' salvation by no means exhausts all problems of semantics in this category of paintings.

⁷The name Avalokiteśvara is used here in connection with paintings from Khara Khoto in the Tibetan style; Guanyin – for those in the Chinese style.

⁸The likely content of the donors' prayers is based on the texts of prayers in analogous icons of Guanyin at Dunhuang, featuring male or female donors and a bride. A detailed account can be found in: M.L. Rudova, vol. XXVII, 1989.

⁹See: L.K. Palaskaya, 1987.

¹⁰The monastery of Yulinku contains wall paintings on the subject, dating from the time of the Tangut. The Khara Khoto collection contains another Chinese style painting of the same subject with the same praying figures (X-2440). See: D. Kobu, 1988, pl. 98 and 101.

¹¹The Khara Khoto collection contains a relatively large group of icons in which Vaiśravaṇa is depicted wearing a warrior's armour, and in which, therefore, he may be seen as the deity offering protection against the enemy.

¹²One other paintings in the Khara Khoto collection (X-2341), not included in this exhibition, displays a similar retinue of attendant figures to that in catalogue number 5, but is quite dissimilar in the crudeness of its drawing, and the garishness of its palette.

¹³Two other icons might be included in this group: the Vajravārāhi (2393) and the *Buddha in Vajrāsana* (Cat. No. 2). See K.F. Samosyuk's commentaries on these exhibits.

¹⁴L.N. Menshikov. (P.K. Kozlov archive), 1984, p. 29.

¹⁵Inventory X-2539. Not included in the exhibition.

¹⁶The form of this text – three word periods – was probably modelled on the popular textbook of Chinese Confucianism *Sun zi jing* (Triple-word), published in the Song period. Points 6, 7, and 16, concerning drunkenness and debauchery form part of the 'five commandments' which were binding on all laymen (male and female) and all monks and nuns.

Filial respect, the mercy of the emperor, the wealth and rank of sons and grandsons were all concepts linked with Confucianism and the cult of ancestor-worship which underpinned the Chinese state.

¹⁷A perforated cartoon from which copies could be taken by sprinkling coloured powder through the perforations.

¹⁸M.L. Rudova, vol. XXVIII, 1967.

¹⁹The numbers refer to the traits indicated on the drawing (Cat. No. 70).

²⁰N.A. Nevsky, vol. I, 1960.

²¹Only three have been published. See: J. Cahill, 1961; C.C. Wang, 1970.

²²S.F. Oldenburg, 1914, pp. 76-77.

²³J. Cahill, 1961.

Some Observations on Comparative Technique Tibetan Style Paintings from Khara Khoto

Robert Bruce-Gardner

In recent years a significant number of early Tibetan paintings, 12th to 14th century, have become available for the examination of materials and technical execution. Regional differences are most obvious in iconographic and stylistic elements, and although discernible in the techniques, allowing for variations and idiosyncrasies. There is sufficient evidence to establish the notion of what is typical in this period of Tibetan art.

The Khara Khoto collection from the State Hermitage Museum is without equal in the world. The extreme rarity of such a diverse assembly of definitively early, precious works of art, displayed here for the first time, offered a unique opportunity to conduct a technical surface examination of a representative selection of the paintings exhibited. A number of these bear Tangut inscriptions on depict Tangut donors and costumes, and the project sought not only to identify what might be termed atypical of more purely Tibetan painting, but to find any criteria that might lead to the definition of the typical in such paintings from Khara Khoto 'school'.

The supports of the paintings include cotton, linen, silk, and wood, a diversity encountered in Tibet, but with a disproportionate number executed on silk. Silk is comparatively rare in Tibet, and then most often used for delicate line drawings with only thin washes of paint, quite unlike the opaque applications, directly on the fine weave, that once covered the entire surface of *Kurukullā* (Cat. No. 25) and *Samvara* (Cat. No. 27) but most of which are now, sadly, lost; only the monk in the lower left corner indicates the colour value and surface of the surviving original state. Whether cotton or linen, the weave is more open and there are four paintings on highly unusual white and blue patterned supports (one cotton, two linen and one silk). Early paintings on wood are, in Tibet, mainly confined to book covers and within the tructure of temple buildings, and paintings on the scale of the *Uṣṇīṣavijayā Maṇḍalas* (Cat. Nos. 20 and 21) must be unusual.

The ground layer of these two panels is extremely thin, not even obscuring the fine grain of the wood, whilst the preparation of *Uṣṇīṣavijayā* (Cat. No. 15), also on wood, is a thick, white, chalky layer, with an absorbant quality. The generally largely open weave of the paintings on cotton and linen have a consistently thin ground, filling the interstices of the weave but barely covering the fibres. The thinness of this layer can be gauged in the easy visibility of the patterned supports through even the paint in *Buddha Śākyamuni Preaching the Prajñāpāramitā* (Cat. No. 4)

and *Kubera (Vaiśravaṇa)* (Cat. No. 55). This is in stark contrast to the majority of Tibetan paintings, where an even, often burnished, ground creates a fairly smooth and polished surface. The general appearance of the ground would suggest a dense clay-like preparation, not unlike that found in Tibetan art; sophisticated analysis of trace elements, however, would be required to establish any significant similarities or discrepancies of the material.

It is not uncommon in early Tibetan painting to find a basic 'grid', often established in red, and underdrawing; occasionally, colour notations can be found within the composition, respecting the canons, and as if 'painting by numbers'. In *Mañjuśrī* (Cat. No. 18), the central vertical axis of a 'grid' can be seen through the face and torso, but was not elsewhere generally observed, and no colour notations at all. Underdrawing, however, usually black or grey, can be discerned in at least half of the paintings examined; most accessible is that on catalogue numbers 20 and 21, where paint loss exposes strong stylised drawing. The variety of finesse is considerable, from the broad loose drawing of catalogue number 27 and the more fine line of catalogue number 25, to the sensuous freedom of *Fragment of a Tangka* (Cat. No. 11). Such a range is readily understandable, given that this stage of painting can give rein to more individual expression, just as in the equally formal strictures of Tibetan Buddhist art, for they were to be obscured by layers of paint. In contrast, the Tibetan application of underpainting most usually serves as a vehicle for more refined or decorative elements on top; X-rays, for instance, reveal a vigorous but dextrous series of brushstrokes, carefully defining colour fields, over which transparent glaze layers of 'scroll work' or detail were laid. In the majority of these Khara Khoto paintings, where it is detectable, the underpainting appears to be a much more fluid and opaque mixture, which was then more or less covered with an upper and still opaque paint, so serving only as a base coat. A particularly striking and largely anomalous practice observed is the extensive use of an opaque pink or terracotta and occasional grey, as opposed to the common use of yellow in Tibet, as a base coat for areas of gold; these also appear to have been left unburnished and not polished to a reflective sheen. A significant exception to this is *Siddha* (Cat. No. 10), one of the most purely Tibetan paintings of the collection, for the paint around the gold jewellery also bears the polished marks of the burnisher. The range of pigments is common to both, and it is the ad-

mixtures, proportion of binding medium and refinement of application that point to certain differences. The only case in which a different pigment may have been used is in the rendering of white. Tibetan white often appears to be well bound and dense, not dissimilar to the ground, although this is by no means the rule; the Khara Khoto paintings display a generally less medium-rich chalkier white, creating a flatter, drier surface, but nor is this the rule.

There is extensive use of indigo and azurite, and more sparingly, malachite, most greens seemingly a mixture of blue and yellow. The yellows, whether 'pure or as an addition, have the distinctive characteristics of orpiment, here showing an unusually coarse grain, with glistening mica-like inclusions. The almost exclusive use of orpiment is certainly notable, as is the rendering of orange in realgar, rather than the more common minium. Instances of a transparent, organic, dark red are scarce, as in the final outlining in *Amitābha* (Cat. No. 9); it may be significant that this and its companion fragment *Siddha* (Cat. No. 10), painted on a tightly woven support, most closely represent Tibetan painting in both technique and style.

It is the occasional and highly unusual achievements of effect that are noteworthy. The purely Pāla style of catalogue number 11, on a finely woven twill, employs, in the depiction of the formalised pink rocks, a technique observed in other Khara Khoto paintings, but not published in relation to Tibetan or Nepalese art; a thin veil of white is laid over pure red, so lending a cast of purple to the pink. A lotus flower in the base of *Eleven-faced, Eight-armed Avalokiteśvara* (Cat. No. 12) uses the same device,

and it is present in *Portrait of a Monk* (Cat. No. 61). This painting also diverges from Tibetan technique in the depiction of the feet, for, instead of an opaque orange red, the tint is achieved with a thin wash of colour over the basic flesh mixture generally speaking darker tones.

Darker tones are represented by the use of less white, but the graduated hues of blue in the antelope drapery in *Avalokiteśvara* (Cat. No. 13) is the result of painting azurite over a flat field of indigo and white. There are several, albeit minor, but anomalous characteristics that many of the paintings examined displayed; it is therefore, interesting to observe that the Chinese style of *Yue Bo* (Cat. No. 58) also exhibits a number of these, so in a sense, bridging, the two styles with similarities in technique. It is executed on an open weave linen of a blue and white check, the ground barely covering the exposed fibres. The sky is a graduation of opaque to thin white over a dark blue, and the small 'cloud-like' arches symbolising the hills of distant landscape are an underlayer of light brown left exposed, surrounded by a veil of white. The green of the foreground is malachite within a white matrix so thickly and fluidly applied that it dried leaving small 'pools' in the surface as it sank into the texture of the support. Characteristically, the gold drapery decoration is underpainted in the ubiquitous pink.

Extrapolation from these observations might assist and support Central Asian scholars in the identification of which images were produced within the Tangut Empire by indigenous or itinerant artists, or which commissioned or imported from more distant sources.

Notes

Measurements indicate the visible painted surface of the works in which the largest measurements are given for irregular or fragmentary format works. With works on paper, the largest dimensions of the paper support is given, and where textile mountings are still attached, the dimensions are given in brackets.

The supports described are diverse, and, where possible, the fibres of the woven fabrics have been identified by visual inspection under magnification. As the paintings have been laid onto a secondary support of paper, examination of the threads was necessarily limited. Analytical methods have not been applied, and when no positive conclusion could be drawn, the entry is qualified with a question mark.

The medium and technique of individual works of art have not been described in the catalogue entries, as extensive and definitive analysis of the binding media, pigments and layer structure has not been possible.

Publications on Himalayan and Central Asian art have usually made references to

the use of an animal or hide glue as the binding medium, but this is largely as description based on earlier literary sources and empirical observations. The vast geographical area from which these works of art are drawn, either in fact or inspiration, preclude the assumption that all the materials and techniques represented can be described in the same terms. Local sources of such materials and the widely differing regional practices have produced a collection of paintings of astonishing diversity.

There are no terms in western artistic practice that exactly describe the techniques, and to make reference to the transparent nature of watercolour or the opacity of gouache would, although close, be both imprecise and slightly misleading. Nearly all of the paintings could be described as being within those technical parameters, but not in the usually precise and accepted understanding of those terms.

The technique of each painting would either seem to be extremely similar, if noted in such simplified terminology, or require a very detailed examination which is beyond the scope of this catalogue.

Catalogue

Double-Headed Buddha

Early 13th century

Sculpture

Clay with polychromy

Height: 62 cm

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2296

Literature: Lubo-Lesnichenko

and Shafranovskaya, 1968.

Béguin, *et al.*, 1977, No. 34.

The famous Chinese pilgrim Xuan Zang, during his wanderings, heard a simple but beautiful story: there once were two men, both devotees of Buddha. Each dreamed of owning an image of the Buddha, but they were too poor to pay an artist for two images, so they commissioned just one. The Buddha, as a mark of kindness and compassion, divided his image in two. This is a typical miracle tale, of the sort which has its place in all religious cultures. The real miracle is not that which strikes the imagination through magic or fantasy, but that which evokes a moral response

in the mind of the listener. It is the miracle of kindness to all men, to every living thing, the miracle which Albert Schweitzer described as reverence towards life.

The artlessness of the story is matched by the earthly materials from which the statue is made: the armature is of reed, wound round with straw and coated with clay – a method used throughout Central Asia. The artist has made no pretence about the simplicity of his material, but, with true artistry, has exploited to the full its particular properties – the capacity of clay to respond to the movement of his hands, then, hardening, to capture that movement for eternity. He has then enhanced the clay with gilding and colour, enlivened the face with a smile, and softened the contours by a gentle modelling of the body and tilt of the head.

The gilding has faded, the colouring is worn, yet this simple clay figure from the "Illustrious" *suburgan* still merits its first place in the catalogue.

K.S.



Detail from Kozlov's original glass negative of the excavated suburgan, 1909.



12th century

Tangka

On cotton

74 × 55.5 cm

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2323

Literature: Oldenburg, 1914, No. 2.

Béguin. *et al.*, 1977, No. 22, p. 81.

The central figure of the *tangka* is the Buddha in *vajrāsana*, painted in yellow with a red cloak, with an *ūrṇā* and a red jewel on top of the *uṣṇīṣa*. He is seated on a lotus throne in *padmāsana*; his right hand is in *bhūmiśparśamudrā*, while his left hand, turned palm upwards, rests on his crossed legs – *dhyānamudrā*. A golden *vajra* lies before him. His cloak is of the ‘monastic’ type, divided into rectangular patches by a broad ribbon with fine gold floral design. His left palm and right foot retain traces of *cakras* drawn in gold.

The back of the throne is blue with a gold floral design; in the upper part, to the left and right of the Buddha’s head, are blue *garuḍas*, holding elongated *qamarus*.

The *tangka* features twenty-nine other figures.

To each side of the Buddha stand two *bodhisattvas* – white Avalokiteśvara and yellow Maitreya. (This identification follows that of Oldenburg, though he, it should be said, offers no evidence in support of his hypothesis. Moreover, the iconography of these two deities here has no parallels in any available sources.) They are in symmetrical postures, with one hand lowered and the other holding the stem of a lotus flower. On the flower lies a gold *vajra*. The two *bodhisattvas* are entirely identical apart from their colour and the position of the *vajras* – that of Avalokiteśvara is upright, that of Maitreya horizontal. The upper row represents five *tathāgatas*, sitting in niches divided by gates; the gates are topped by gold *stūpas*. They are all

painted in yellow, wearing red monastic robes, and differentiated only by their gestures, from which we can determine their names. The gestures are: (11) both hands in *dhyānamudrā*, (12) both hands in *dharmacakramudrā*, (13) right hand is in *abhayamudrā*, left hand in *dhyānamudrā* (14) damaged, but, judging by traces of red on the lotus throne, the right hand was most likely in *bhūmiśparśamudrā*, the left in *dhyānamudrā*. According to B.

Bhattacharyya,¹ this would identify the deities as: (11) Amitābha, (12) Vairocana, (13) Amoghasiddhi, (14) Akṣobhya. Consequently, (10), which has been lost, together with the whole upper left hand corner, can only be Ratnasambhava, whose right hand is in *varadamudrā*.

In the next row down are six *bodhisattvas* (4-9), all absolutely identical, seated, their arms folded in *añjalimudrā*. The alternating use of white and yellow is probably intended simply to enhance the coloration rhythm of the *tangka* as a whole.

In the centre of the second row from the bottom are three deities: a blue Vajrapāṇi (18) with a closed blue lotus flower by his left shoulder and a *vajra* in his left hand; a blue Siṃhanāda Avalokiteśvara (19) with, to his right, a trident around which is entwined a snake, and, to his left, a lotus flower with an upright sword; and a green Samantabhadra, holding a *vajra* to his chest with his right hand, and with a lotus flower by his left shoulder. All three are sitting on lotus thrones in *rājatilāsana*; Vajrapāṇi has his right leg bent at the knee, Samantabhadra – his left.

(17) and (21) are difficult to identify.

(17) is yellow, crowned, and kneeling (*pranāmāsana*?). In his raised left hand he is holding a gold vessel of the type known as a *kaḷaśa*, while, due to damage, it is impossible to ascertain the position of the right hand or any attribute it may be holding. Only one deity with this iconography can be found in available





sources – Indra from the *dikpāla* group. Even then, the analogous Indra is a mirror image of the deity in this *tangka*, and is holding (in both hands) a shell, not a vessel. The damage to (21) is more severe. This deity is also yellow in colour and crowned, and is in *prāyālīḍhāsana*. In his raised right hand he is holding a golden *vajra* – or some *vajra*-like attribute with a handle, possibly a sword, or *daṇḍa*, or *gadā*. The left arm is badly damaged, and one can see no more than that it is folded by the deity's chest. Beneath his feet lies a blue, crowned deity – but no further detail is discernible. If the tentative identification of (17) as Indra is correct, then his opposite number (21) is also likely to be a representative of the *dikpāla* group, possibly Kubera, mounted on a man. (16) and (22) are clearly *nāgas*, white, kneeling and holding in their raised hands vessels decorated with coloured ribbons and containing precious stones. At each end of this row stands a lama (15) and (23). Both stand out by virtue of being on a larger scale than the surrounding deities. They are dressed in close-fitting dark red robes, with light undergarments. Their bodies are concealed by orange cloaks, thrown over their shoulders. Both are shaven-headed with small beards and moustaches.¹ The paint on the face of (23) has flaked off, obliterating the facial features. (15) shows every sign of having been deliberately painted to create the likeness of a specific person, with its long, beak-like nose, and many deep furrows on the brow and the bridge of the nose. The particularly fine quality of the brushwork suggests that the two lamas are by the hand of a separate artist. However that may be, it is quite impossible to determine who exactly the lamas are, or to which Buddhist order they belonged. At the centre of the bottom row is a two-armed yellow *bodhisattva* (27). His right

hand is resting on his knee, his left is raised to his chest. Both are in *viṭarkamudrā*. Paint loss makes it impossible to say whether he is holding any attributes. On his right is a pink, four-armed deity (26). His two main hands are by his chest, possibly in *dharmacakramudrā*. His other hands are raised to his shoulders, the right hand holding a gold *vajra*, the left a gold *mālā*. He may be a form of *prajñāpāramitā*,² though many details of the iconography do not coincide with the image published by Clark.

To the right of centre in the bottom row is a four-armed blue *bodhisattva* (28). In one pair of hands, pressed against his chest, he is holding a gold *mālā*, while the other pair are raised to his shoulders.

Second from the left of the bottom row (25) is a red three-headed, four-armed Hayagrīva with a tiger skin loincloth and a horse's head in his hair. Second from the right (29) is a blue three-headed, eight-armed divinity with a cape thrown across his shoulders. This may be an early iconographical variation of Pravīra Tārā – the 'fierce' form of Tārā.³

The bottom row is flanked by two fierce deities: Vajrapāṇi (24) and Acala (30).

The overall composition of the *tangka* is clear: in the upper part are the highest deities of the Vajrayāna pantheon, in the lower – teachers and protective deities. The five *tathāgatas* (10-14) are commonly found in the paintings from Khara Khoto, though they are arranged differently in all the works in which they appear. The six *bodhisattvas* in the second row (4-9) are probably combined with Avalokiteśvara and Maitreya into the Eight-*bodhisattva* group which was so popular in the art of Vajrayāna. This is the more likely, given that a six *bodhisattva* cycle is not found in Vajrayāna art. Thus both cycles – *tathāgatas* and *bodhisattvas* – are shown here in their entirety.

The figures in the two lower rows present

problems, however. They are drawn from different iconographic groups, and many of these groupings are here incomplete. So, for example, Vajrapāṇi, Sīṅhanāda Avalokiteśvara and Samantabhadra (18, 19, 20) most probably represent the group of five *dhyānibodhisattvas*, while Indra (?) and Kubera (?) (17, 21) represent the group of eight (or ten) *dikpālas*.

It is the very bottom row which raises the greatest difficulties. The two symmetrical flanking deities, Vajrapāṇi and Acala, would appear to be protectors. It is worth noting that on a well known *tangka* of Amitāyus, dating from the same period, and belonging almost certainly to the same Tibetan school as the Khara Khoto works, Acala and Hayagrīva also serve as protective deities. Moreover, the iconography of Acala in that *tangka* is identical to that of the same deity in the present work.⁴

Hayagrīva and Pravīra Tārā (?) (25, 29) must presumably be connected with some other higher-ranking group of protective deities. This is evident from the similarity of the images of Hayagrīva and Pravīra Tārā to the group of three deities in the middle of the bottom row. At the same time, Hayagrīva and Pravīra Tārā differ from Vajrapāṇi and Acala. As for the three deities in the middle of the bottom row (26-28), their identity cannot be established, and one can only assume that they represent a group of *yidams*. G.L.

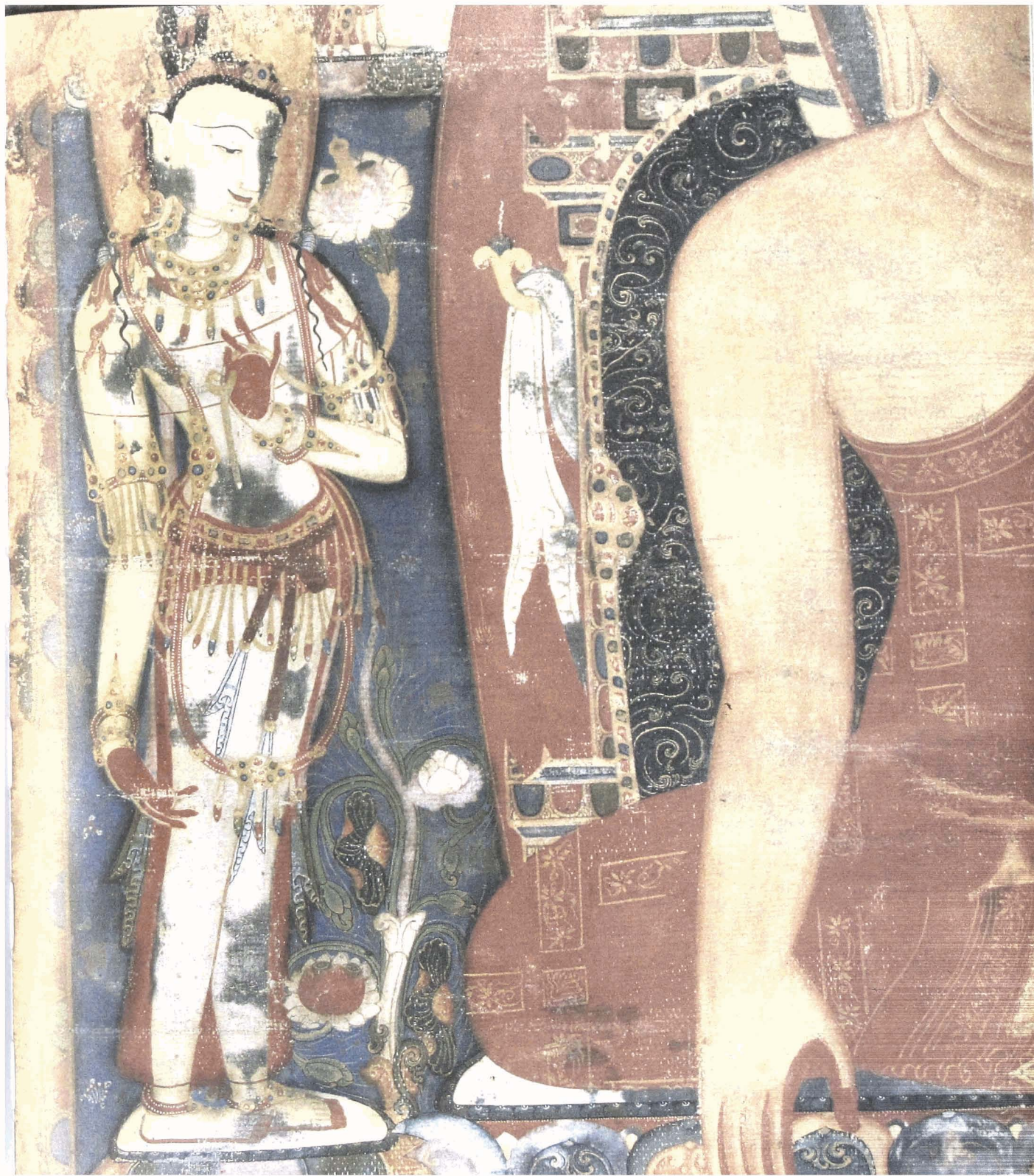
¹B. Bhattacharyya, 1968, pp. 49-73.

²What looks like a thick growth of hair on the left side of the head of No. 23 is in fact a paint 'run'.

³See for instance, W.E. Clark 1937, vol. II, No. 6A6

⁴See for instance, *rab-tu dpa' bu'i sGrol-ma* in the pantheon *Five Hundred Gods*, published by L. Chandra (3., vol. IX, Plate 92c) or *myur-zhing dpa'i sGrol-ma* in the pantheon *Three Hundred and Sixty Gods*, published by W. E. Clark (5., vol. II, p. 276, No. 207)

⁵6 *ibid.* Plate 7, p. 134.



Early 13th century

Tangka

On silk

26.5 × 17 cm

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2343

The Buddha Amitābha is depicted seated in *padmāsana* on a lotus throne, with his hands in *dhyānamudrā*. This painting relates to the images of the buddha in *Buddha in Vajrāsana* (Cat. No. 2) and *Buddha Śākyamuni Preaching the Prajñāpāramitā* (Cat. No. 4). The base of the lotus throne is decorated with jewels and a semi-circular, floral patterned, red rug with a scrolled blue border. On either side of the floral rug are blue lion faces (*kīrttimukhas*), the symbol

of victory. The back of the throne has two geese (*haṃsas*) and, as in catalogue number 4, their plumage are stylised into a scroll pattern which form a lateral decoration for the Buddha's nimbus.

The imagery of the plumage of the geese seems to be an adaptation by the artist of actual decorative elements seen in the more refined representations of the Buddha as seen in *Buddha in Vajrāsana* (Cat. No. 2) and *Teaching Buddha Śākyamuni* (Cat. No. 5). In all these decorative motifs the artist has taken the iconography from the *tangka*'s available at the time and copied them naively, perhaps without an understanding of the iconographical elements nor their meanings clearly.

M.R.



Buddha
Śākyamuni Preaching
the Prajñāpāramitā

Early 13th century

Tangka

On blue and white patterned cotton

160 × 108 cm*

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X.2337

Literature: Oldenburg, 1914,

No. 17, p. 30.

Figure (1) is Buddha Śākyamuni, with a slightly elongated face. He is in a cloak, arranged in spreading ribbon-like folds, and with one corner thrown across his left shoulder. His hands are in *dharmacakramudrā*. He is seated on a cushion atop a lotus with two rows of 'flowering' petals, in *padmāsana*. Behind his back is a cushion. The throne consists of rectangular slats of various sizes, decorated with precious stones. On the uppermost slat are two *baṃsas*, whose stylised plumage merges into the curls which frame the *śiraścakra*. From below the central slat two drapes hang down on either side of the throne. The base of the throne is decorated with the lower half of a circle set in an elegant fabric; at its sides are two blue *kīrttimukhas*, which are often shown on Buddhas' thrones. As early as the fourth century they came to symbolise the lion, and acquired the meaning of 'Face of Glory' or of victory.

The figure of the Buddha Śākyamuni sits on his lotus throne beneath a trilobate arch, offering access, as it were, to an open-fronted *caitya*, richly decorated with projecting terraces and hung with fluttering ribbons. It forms a frame for the central figure.

(2) At the bottom of the *tangka* in the centre is a square pool, bordered by stone edging decorated with coloured rocks, from which rises a large multi-coloured lotus. The lotus, on which lies a golden blazing *cakra* – symbol of Buddhist doctrine, is supported by two yellow *nāgas*. To them,

so tradition tells us, the Buddha Śākyamuni entrusted the guarding of the *Prajñāpāramitā*, the work describing the 'Perfection of Wisdom'. The pool is filled with golden water, and on its surface float the leaves and flowers of lotuses.

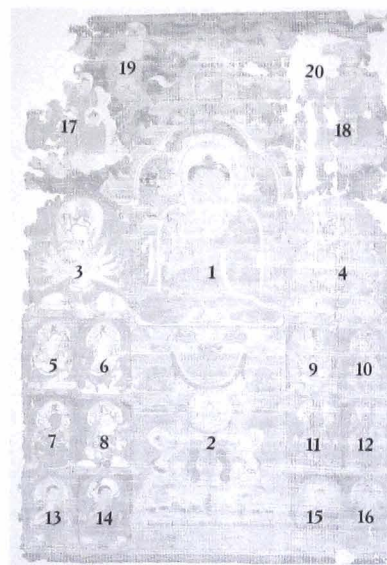
(3) is a white deity with four heads, one white, one blue, one red, and the topmost one green. His hair is black and surrounded by flame. The line of his brows almost meets above his nose. He has a third, vertical eye in his forehead. His twelve hands hold the following attributes (others are not discernible): on the left – a *vajra*, a *mālā*, a *triśūla*, and a *khaṭvāṅga*; on the right – a *pāśa*, an *ahkuśa*, a *khaḍga*, a *cāpa* and a *karṭṭikā*.

Judging by certain attributes and the number of heads and arms, this may possibly be the tantric form of Avalokiteśvara. It is precisely Avalokiteśvara who is the main guardian of the essential Buddhist *sūtras*, amongst which the *Prajñāpāramitā* takes pride of place. It should be noted, however, that amongst 108 esoteric forms of Avalokiteśvara, not one corresponds exactly to this image.

As a working hypothesis we may speculate that this deity is not Avalokiteśvara, but Mahāpratisarā, the chief of the five goddess-protectors of the home, who avert the loss of cattle, evil spirits, sickness etc. They occur particularly frequently in Nepal. Her two main attributes, held against her breast, a *vajra* and a lasso in *tarjanīmudrā*, are those of the deities who are protectors of the 'Great Law'. In the number of her heads and arms, as well as most of the remaining attributes, she corresponds iconographically to the 'White' figure.

(4) The poor state of preservation makes the identification of this fourteen-armed white deity impossible.

Amongst the next group (5-12) we can find, with their proper attributes: green





Virūdhaka with a sword (7), white Dhṛtarāṣṭra with a lute (8), red Virūpākṣa with a *caitya* (?) (11), and green Vaiśravaṇa with a banner (12).

(13-16) are monks with skins of various colours, wearing cloaks, and all in *padmāsana*, with their right hands in *vitarkamudrā*.

(17, 18) – two groups of five Buddhas are symmetrically arranged, seated on clouds, with their bodies totally enfolded in their robes.

Behind the back of the throne or cushion with a spiral plant design there are lotus-like *śiraścakras*.

(19, 20) – to each side of the top of the *caitya*, against a background of clouds, are *vidyādharas*. The one on the left is holding a *cintāmaṇi* – a symbol of the Buddha and the doctrine. The one on the right is holding flowers. Between them is a small *caitya* containing a Buddha figure.

Any further detail is impossible to see, due to the poor state of preservation. This *tangka* is unique. Available literature offers no even approximate analogies in subject, composition, or grouping of deities. The Hermitage collection contains some items similar in style and in the treatment of certain Nepalese-Tibetan iconographic details.¹

M.R.

¹X-2361, X-2350, X-2349, X-2345, X-2342, X-2364





12th century

Tangka

On linen (?)

60 × 41 cm

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2342

Literature: Oldenburg, 1914, No. 23, p. 33.

The Buddha is seated on a lotus throne in *padmāsana*. He is wearing a cloak, with his left shoulder bare. His hands are in *dharmacakramudrā*. He has an oval nimbus, and the *mandorla* is decorated with a stylised floral pattern. The back of the throne has rectangular slats, and is decorated with birds. To his right and left stand two *bodhisattvas*, Padmapāṇi holding a lotus, and Maitreya holding a vessel

decorated with branches. Both have their hands in *vitarkamudrā*. Above them to the Buddha's right and left are his two favourite disciples, Ānanda and Kāśyapa. In each upper corner is a *caitya*. They are two of the eight erected in honour of various events connected with the life of the Buddha Śākyamuni. Here, one is associated with the achievement of the Highest Wisdom, the other with the First Sermon. The latter is connected with the turning of the Wheel of the Law, symbolising the dissemination of Buddhism and the confounding of its enemies. In the lower part of the *tangka* are depicted a pile of four books and a bundle of three scrolls. Buddhist symbolism equates books with the Buddhist canon.
M.R.



Buddha in Vajrāsana and the Five Great Caityas

12th-13th centuries

Tangka

On cotton

49.2 × 39.5 cm

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2326

Literature: Oldenburg, 1914.

This description is based on that written by S.F. Oldenburg.

“Eight great *caityas*, or monuments, were raised in places sanctified by events in the life of the Buddha. The four *caityas* connected with the most important events in his life have the same names in various texts: *Jāti* (birth), *Bodhi* (Attainment of the Highest Wisdom), *Dharmacakrapravartana* (Setting in Motion the Wheel of the Law), and *Mahāparinirvāṇa* (Death). The other four, which, though pertaining to significant events in the life of the teacher, were of lesser importance, are not always named in the same way.”

In the centre of the *tangka* the Buddha Śākyamuni is seated on a lotus throne in *padmāsana*. His left hand is in *dhyānamudrā*, his right in *bhūmisparīśamudrā*. In front of him, on his robe, lies a *vajra*. He is flanked by two *bodhisattvas*: on his right, white Avalokiteśvara with a white lotus in his left hand, and on his left yellow Maitreya holding a lotus with a golden vessel. The Buddha is depicted within a *caitya*, which Oldenburg suggests is the famous Mahābodhi temple. Behind the *caitya* is a trefoil bodhi-tree – the tree of wisdom, seated under which the Buddha attained enlightenment. At the bottom of the *tangka*, five *caityas* share a common base – apparently an attempt by the artist to depict a structure “something like the Mahābodhi in Bodh-Gayā, where a large central *caitya* is surrounded by four smaller ones. The inscription indicates that this *caitya* relates to the Buddha’s miraculous

defeat of the heretical teachers, Mahāprātihārya. Each of the wide bands down the sides of the *tangka* is divided into three cells; each cell contains a smaller copy of the central *caitya*, on a blue background. Above them are cartouches with inscriptions. Reading from top to bottom, those to the Buddha’s right are: (1) Mahāyānacaitya on Mount Gṛdhrakūṭa,¹ (2) the *caitya* on the site of the house of Vimalakīrti, (3) the descent from heaven; and on the Buddha’s left: (4) the sermon at Benares – *Dharmacakrapravartana*, (5) birth – *Jāti*, and (6) the Great Death – Mahāparinirvāṇa.”²

In style this *tangka* is similar to the Buddha Śākyamuni in Vajrāsana *tangka* from Khara Khoto, which was shown in the ‘Wisdom and Compassion’ exhibition (No. 135). Indeed, the subject of the Eight *Caityas* occurs in five items in the Kozlov collection, and all are similar in style. It is, of course, curious that in a Tibetan-style painting, the clouds to each side of the top of the *caitya* are painted in the Chinese manner, and that the cartouches contain inscriptions (itself a rarity in the Khara Khoto collection) in both Chinese and Tangut characters.

K.S.

¹Vulture Peak: an object of special veneration for adepts of the Mahāyāna.

²To avoid encumbering the text with transcriptions of the Chinese and Tangut names of the *caityas*, we have given the original Sanskrit names.



Late 12th - early 13th century

Tangka

On linen (?)

111 × 82 cm

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2332

Literature: Oldenburg, 1914.

Karmay, 1975, plate 7.

Béguin *et al.*, 1977, p. 123.

Rhie and Thurman, 1991, No. 133.

Bhaiṣajyaguru, the Medicine Buddha, is depicted, in conformity with iconographic tradition, wearing a bright red robe divided into rectangular patches of various sizes by broad brown bands with a gold floral design – a stylised version of monastic dress, which, according to the rules of the first Indian Buddhist communities, had to be sewn from old scraps of cloth. The Buddhist symbols of the Eight Auspicious Objects and the palace on Mount Meru, the cosmic mountain at the centre of the universe, are drawn in fine gold lines within the rectangular sections.

Bhaiṣajyaguru's retinue consists here of thirty nine deities. The central Buddha's seven attendant Buddhas occupy their usual places in the top row. The *bodhisattvas* Sūryaprabha and Candraprabha stand, respectively, to the central Buddha's right and left. The *bodhisattvas* are identified by their colour, and by their attributes, the traditional Chinese symbols of sun and moon – a red disc with a black, three-legged cockerel, and a white disc with a hare, which is mixing the elixir of eternal life in a mortar. Above Sūryaprabha is a table with books, and a pair of fly whisks, while above Candraprabha is a *stūpa* containing the Three Jewels. Each of these two objects is on a lotus pedestal with a nimbus of parallel-striped flames. Four *bodhisattvas* are depicted in each of

two vertical rows to the sides of the *tangka*. Their iconography is extremely vague, and thus far has not allowed their precise identification. Below them, occupying the places third from the bottom in each side row, are Buddhist monks in robes of the same brown cloth as that of the edging on Bhaiṣajyaguru's robe. Below the monks are two deities from the *dikpāla* group: four-faced Brahma to the right and Indra to the left.

The central eight places of the two bottom rows are occupied by twelve prince-*yakṣas* and four *lokapālas*. The *yakṣas* occupy all eight central places in the bottom row and two places to each side of the second row from the bottom. The remaining four places in the middle of this row contain the four *lokapālas*: white Dhṛtarāṣṭra holding a *vīṇā* (east), blue Virūḍhaka holding a sword (south), red Virūpākṣa with a serpent (west), and green Vaiśravaṇa with a banner and a mongoose (north).

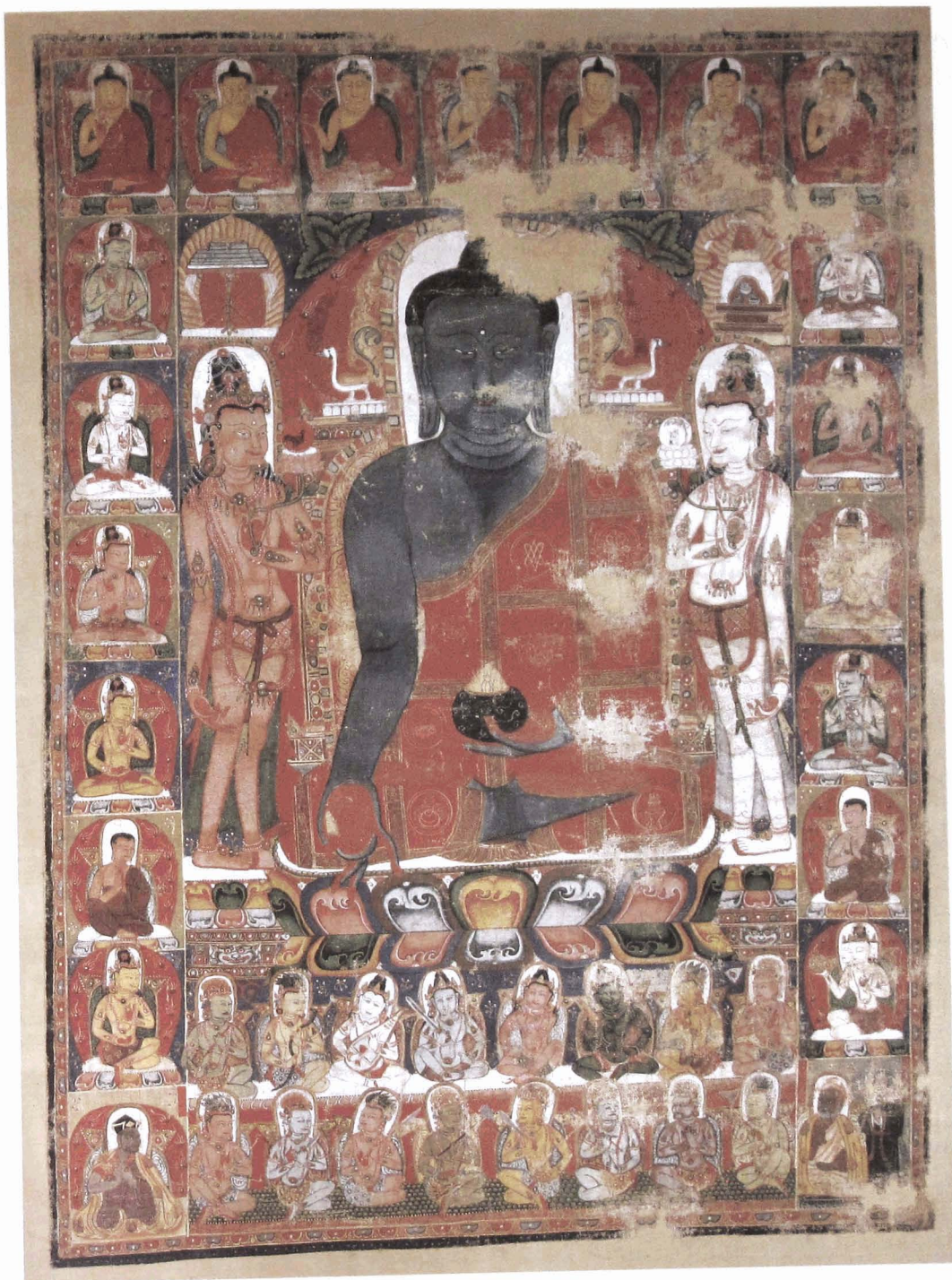
The two lamas in the bottom corners of the *tangka* are fascinating. Each is haloed and seated on a cushioned throne. The lama on the left is dressed in an orange undergarment with short sleeves, a brown robe of patches and yellow stitched edging, and a yellow outer robe with a medallion motif. He has a moustache, a thin black beard which frames his face, and a black hat with fine yellow edging. On the front of the hat is a yellow diamond-shaped patch with a red *viśvavajra* on it.

This is the hat of the Black-Hat Karma-pa, the patriarch of the Karma-pas, a branch of the Kagyupas. Dusum Kyenpa (1110-1193) may be the person represented here. However, if this be the case, then the *tangka* must have been painted after his death. Another possibility is that he is one of the successors of the founder of the Karma-pa. The lama in the lower right corner is dressed in a brown coat with long sleeves, a white inner robe, and a yellow outer robe

decorated with solid-colour medallions. He has a bluish-grey beard and holds a bell in his right hand. He appears to be wearing a yellow hat with short, pointed lappets. Although he cannot be positively identified, he may be Indian; this type of hat with its pointed lappets or hanging flaps is to be found elsewhere in the Khara Khoto *tangkas*. In the Avalokiteśvara (14), for example, there are some round-faced, dark-skinned figures who look very much like Indians; they are wearing similar hats, or turbans.

Behind this lama stands a man in a wide-sleeved black robe with a brown sash, and his hands together in prayer. He has a black beard and straight black hair, both drawn with individual black lines. The upper and lower parts of this figure are badly damaged; the paint has completely gone. However, his clothing gives us good reason to assume that this is a Tangut layman, most likely the patron-donor of the work.

The *tangka's* most distinctive feature is decorative – the blazing jewels and green shoots with red and white buds filling the empty spaces around the deities. G.L.



Late 12th - early 13th century

Tangka

On cotton

121 × 82 cm

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2335

Literature: Oldenburg, 1914, p. 29, No. 15.

The central compositional principle of this *tangka* is a simple dynamic, based on the symmetry of the figures and the alternation of contrasting colours.

Bhaiṣajyaguru's retinue consists of thirty one deities, a smaller number than in any of the other four Medicine Buddha *tangkas* from Khara Khoto.

The iconography of the central figure is in conformity with the Central Asian tradition. The back of the Buddha's throne, decorated with a complex pyramidal composition of elephants, goats and geese, can be traced back to Indian art of the Pāla dynasty (8th-12th centuries), which was the most influential source of style for the Nepalese-Tibetan school.

Bhaiṣajyaguru is flanked by two *bodhisattvas*, pink Suryaprabha to his right and white Candraprabha to his left. In all four of the other Khara Khoto *tangkas* of Bhaiṣajyaguru, the positions of these two *bodhisattvas* are reversed. On the left, above the Buddha's head, is a white *stūpa*, on the right – a table with a pile of Tibetan *pothīs* on it. By the leg of the table lie two *cāmaras*.

The upper row is occupied by his seven attendants, all sitting in *padmāsana*, and differentiated only by their gestures. The paint has been lost from some of these figures, making identification of their names impossible.

In the row beneath the Buddha's throne are ten deities. The second from the left is immediately recognisable as Virūpākṣa by his pink skin and the snake he is holding; the second from the right, white-skinned

and holding a *vīṇā*, is Dhṛtarāṣṭra. First on the right, painted blue, and holding a flag (*dhvaja*) resembling a spear would appear to be Vaiśravaṇa; in which case, the first on the left, a yellow *lokapāla* whose gesture and attributes can hardly be made out, would be Virūḍhaka.

Third from the left, a white three-faced Brahma is one of the ten *dīkṣālas*, and corresponds to the symmetrically depicted figure third from the right, a yellow deity with a spear who looks like Indra.

The four central cells in the row are occupied by three *bodhisattvas* of the Eight *bodhisattva* Group, and a Buddhist monk, all sitting in *padmāsana*. The monk, judging by his 'monastic' rather than 'lamaist' appearance, must be one of the canonised teachers associated with the early dissemination of the Buddhist medical tradition. His presence among Bhaiṣajyaguru's retinue may have been obligatory, since we find monks depicted in all of the *tangkas* of this deity from Khara Khoto. This would explain the disruption of the *tangka's* symmetry, the figure of the monk taking the place of what would have been a fourth *bodhisattva*.

In the bottom row are the twelve *yakṣas*. Their iconography has not yet been fully studied. In any case, the attributes of several of them are difficult to make out, which aggravates the problem of trying to identify them with names mentioned in the *Bhaiṣajyagurusūtra* and other later sources.

This same problem arises with other *tangkas* of Bhaiṣajyaguru

from Khara Khoto.

G.L.





12th century

Tangka fragment

On cotton (?)

12 × 11 cm

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2350

Literature: Oldenburg, 1914, No. 32.

In this fragment of a larger *tangka*, red Amitābha sits in *padmāsana*, bedecked with jewels. His throne rests on a multicoloured lotus amidst mountains; its back, as is typical of the *tangkas* from Khara Khoto, has scrollwork decoration. The Buddha's hands are in *dhyānamudrā*. His robe is red, with two thin gold stripes along the edge. "The painting," writes Oldenburg, "is subtle, and Indian in manner."
K.S. (Based on Oldenburg)



12th century

Tangka fragment

On cotton (?)

8 × 8 cm

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2399

Literature: Oldenburg, 1914, No. 85.

This is a fragment of a larger *tangka*, and very similar to the *Amitābha* (Cat. No. 9). Indeed, it would appear to be part of the same work. We see what looks like a cave in the mountains..., its interior red in colour, below which, as in the *Amitābha* painting, rise stems of golden grass. Within, on a spotted skin, sits... a *siddha*, a magician. He is brown, his palms and the soles of his feet are red. He is wearing a green loincloth, with a gold pattern, a stripe around the edge, and a blue belt. His black hair, decorated with gold ornaments, is gathered into a topknot; locks tied with red ribbon fall on to his shoulders. He has gold earrings, a necklace, bracelets and anklets. His nimbus is white, elongated, with a red stripe. The bow and arrow he is holding suggest that this is *Savaripa*. Behind him to his left, is a yellow woman, presumably a *dākinī*, who is stroking the sole of his left foot. She has black hair and a tiara, while her nimbus is similar to that of the central figure.

(From Oldenburg, *Materials on Buddhist Iconography of Khara Khoto*, 1914, No. 85)





12th century
Tangka fragment
On linen (?)
12 × 85 cm
The State Hermitage Museum,
St. Petersburg
X-2359

Catalogue numbers 9, 10, 11 – three fragments give every appearance of stylistic propinquity; indeed, at first glance, they may easily be assumed to have been parts of a single large *tangka*. They are obviously similar in palette, in line, in their fine detail, in the stylised treatment of the mountains.¹ Yet doubts remain. It is hard to relate the scale of the two figures in *Amitābha* (Cat. No. 9) and *Siddha* (Cat. No. 10) with those in the *Fragment of a Tangka* (Cat. No. 11) and there are obvious dissimilarities in the blue tones.

The Khara Khoto collection, and the exhibition, contain several fragments which were, as their smoothly cropped edges testify, deliberately cut from larger works, or pasted together in ancient times in order to preserve them. All these fragments are clearly masterpieces: this one being the finest of all.

It may be that the sheer beauty of the painting endowed this piece with some

particular magical quality. The right hand edge of the fragment was the edge of the larger work: it is framed like many of the Khara Khoto *tangkas*, by a border of painted jewels. The faces of the *bodhisattvas* and monks are all turned to the centre, while the various groups of figures, set against stylised mountains, are separated by further jewelled strips. The background is deep red, and decorated with blossoming trees and multicoloured cliffs – the abode of the gods. At the top, cartouches contain gold inscriptions in Chinese, Tibetan and Tangut. This linguistic combination clearly indicates the work's association with Tangut culture, but by no means proves that it was painted in Xi Xia. It is more likely that it was commissioned by Tanguts, but painted elsewhere, possibly in Nepal.

K.S.

¹See: K. Samosyuk's article *The Art of the Tangut Empire* in this catalogue.



12
**Eleven-faced,
 Eight-armed
 Avalokiteśvara**

12th century
Tangka
 On cotton
 132 × 94 cm
 The State Hermitage Museum,
 St. Petersburg
 X-2355

Literature: Oldenburg, 1914.
 Béguin *et al.*, 1977, No. 25.
 Rhie and Thurman, 1991, No. 128.

This strong, vivid eleven-faced, eight-armed Ekādaśamukha Avalokiteśvara sits in the diamond posture on a lotus throne with two rows of petals. From the front of the throne hangs a small rug. A striped garment in red, blue, green and gold covers his loins. His heads are arranged pyramid-fashion: three tiers of three, above them a 'fierce' face, and, crowning the pyramid, a red Amithāba face, topped with an *uṣṇīṣa*. This iconography of Avalokiteśvara is based on Chapter 24 of the *Lotus sūtra*. His two main hands are in *añjalimudrā*, and hold a *cintāmaṇi*. His other right hands hold *mālā*, are in *varamudrā*, and hold a *cakra*. His other left hands hold a white lotus, a *kunḍikā* and a bow and arrow. The iconography of the central figure, his throne, and the other deities derives from the Indian and Nepalese traditions. The five *tathāgatas* in the upper row seem very Tibetan in style. The dark green, flower-strewn background is common in the Khara Khoto *tangkas* – though the ground colour may also be blue or red. To left and right behind Avalokiteśvara are two monks with their hands in *vyākhyānamudrā*. They may be Ānanda and Mahākaśyapa. Avalokiteśvara is surrounded by eight deities. Those symmetrically arranged in the two vertical cells to each side of the main figure are *bodhisattva*-like forms of the four *lokapālas*. To the upper left sits the white guardian of the East, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, with a lute. Immediately beneath him is green Vaiśravaṇa, Lord of the North,

holding a flag. On the upper right is blue Virūḍhakha, Guardian of the South, holding a sword; and below him red Virūpākṣa, Guardian of the West, holding a white snake.

The deities in the bottom row share a single lotus throne. On the left is a red Hayagrīva, next to him a white Sitāpatrā holding a parasol, which, despite the goddess' name, is not white, but tiger-striped; next, a yellow Mārīcī with a white fly whisk; and finally, bottom right, a Green Tārā with a blue lotus. The linking of these four deities in one group cannot yet be satisfactorily explained. Some *sādhana*s (evocations) of Avalokiteśvara include Hayagrīva and Tārā.¹ Mārīcī may be the companion of Tārā. However, the composition of this *tangka* and its pantheon do not fully correspond with any known *sādhana*. The four guardians of the directions occupy places that do not match the cardinal points in the composition of the *maṇḍala*, so the *tangka* is not arranged on the principle of a *maṇḍala*.

K.S.

¹See: de Mallman, 1975, pp. 107- 110.



12th-13th century

Tangka fragment

On silk

27 × 28.8 cm

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2352

Literature: Oldenburg, 1914, No. 35.

Béguin, *et al.*, 1977, n.p.

Krechetova, 1980, n.p.

In this sole surviving fragment of a large *tangka*, the white, one-headed, four-armed *bodhisattva* is, according to Oldenburg, the image known in invocations as *Ṣaḍakṣarī Mahāvidyā Lokeśvara*, and corresponds to texts glorifying the *bodhisattva* and the sacred six syllable formula (*ṣaḍakṣarī*):
o maṇi padme hūm.

The *bodhisattva*'s main arms are in *añjalimudrā*, the second right hand elegantly clasping a rosary, while the left cannot be seen. He has an antelope skin draped across his shoulders, and is wearing a crown, earrings, necklaces, bracelets, and a red *bodhisattva*'s cord studded with precious stones. All this, together with the luxuriant curls of hair lying upon his shoulders and the fluttering ribbons serve to enliven a picture painted with elegance and economy.

K.S.



12th-13th century

Tangka

On silk

59.7 × 46.3 cm

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X.2354

Literature: Oldenburg, 1914, No. 37.

White (Oldenburg considers him pink), one-faced, four-armed Avalokiteśvara has his main arms in *añjalimudrā*; his second right hand holds a rosary, his left – a lotus. This is the same iconographic form of *Ṣaḍaḥṣarī Avalokiteśvara* as in catalog number 13, except that this *bodhisattva* has an image of the Amitābha on his crown. He is seated on a white cushion, placed on a multicoloured lotus. His throne is draped with a red rug. Clouds surround the throne, and the background is red with a floral design.

Below and to the sides are two monks,¹ while in the bottom left-hand corner is a donor holding a censer. Oldenburg states: “The technique is crude, Tibetan in style,

though one can detect a strong Chinese influence, particularly in the treatment of the lotus, the clouds and the throne.”

Certainly, this *tangka* reveals both Chinese and Tibetan iconographic and stylistic elements, which warrant our describing it as a work of Sino-Tibetan art. It might perhaps be added that the material on which it is painted – silk – clearly associates it with China. Whether it is in fact the work of Tibetan artists, as Oldenburg asserts, is difficult to tell.

It is difficult also to concur with his view that the technique is “crude”; though the drawing of the clouds may be clumsy, the lotus is delicately defined, and the *tangka* as a whole has a quality of its own.

It may perhaps be linked with some as yet unknown Central Asian (Uighur?) tradition.

K.S.

¹See: *The Kbara Khoto Tangkas and Buddhist Sects* in Samosyuk's article *The Art of the Tangut Empire* in this catalogue.



12th-13th century
 Painting on wood
 18.5 × 12 cm
 The State Hermitage Museum,
 St. Petersburg
 X-2469
Literature: Oldenburg, 1914.
 Béguin *et al.*, 1977.

White, three-faced, eight-armed Victorious Uṣṇīṣa, Goddess of Longevity, merciful and powerful, is seated in *padmāsana* on a white moon cushion. In her crown is the image of a Buddha – presumably Vairocana, since the goddess is one of his emanations. Her faces, white, yellow and blue, are three-eyed. In her right hands she holds an image of the Buddha, and arrows, while the lowest right hand lies with open palm. In her left hands she holds a lasso, a bow and a vase with the elixir of eternal life. Her main right hand holds a *vajra*, her left – a lasso.

This small painting formed a part of some

larger object which has not survived. Grek¹ speculates that it may have been connected with the *stūpa* (Cat. No. 16) – though it is difficult to see how precisely.

Uṣṇīṣavijayā's throne is typical of many of the Khara Khoto paintings, and indeed of many Tibetan paintings of the period, in having a back with scrollwork decoration. Stylistically, it is close to the *Eleven-faced, Eight-armed Avalokiteśvara* (Cat. No. 12) and the two *maṇḍalas* (Cat. Nos. 20, 21).

In describing the medium used to paint this image (as well as catalogue numbers 20, 21) as tempera, one accepts, of course, that the term is being used only loosely. However, the wooden panel, the thin layer of chalk ground, and the organic glue used as binder for the pigments all bring the technique used for the creation of these works from Khara Khoto close to tempera. K.S.

¹In: Béguin *et al.*, 1977.



12th-13th centuries

On wood

Height: 44 cm

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2035

Literature: Béguin *et al.*, 1977, No. 32.

The *stūpa* is a ritual object in architectural form, a sort of reliquary which can be traced back in origin to pre-Buddhist India. After the *nirvāṇa* of the historical Buddha Śākyamuni, his remains were placed in *stūpas*. Subsequently, *stūpas* were erected over the tombs of famous monks, or in particular holy places venerated by followers of the faith. The ritual of *pradakṣiṇa* (circumambulation around a *stūpa*) was widespread throughout the Buddhist world. The *stūpa* came to symbolise the *dharmakāya* – the spiritual body of the Buddha, and was a traditional attribute of certain deities. Vaiśravaṇa, one of the *lokapālas*, always holds a *stūpa* in his right hand. As an object of veneration, *stūpas* were frequently depicted on *tangkas*, or reproduced in wood or clay.

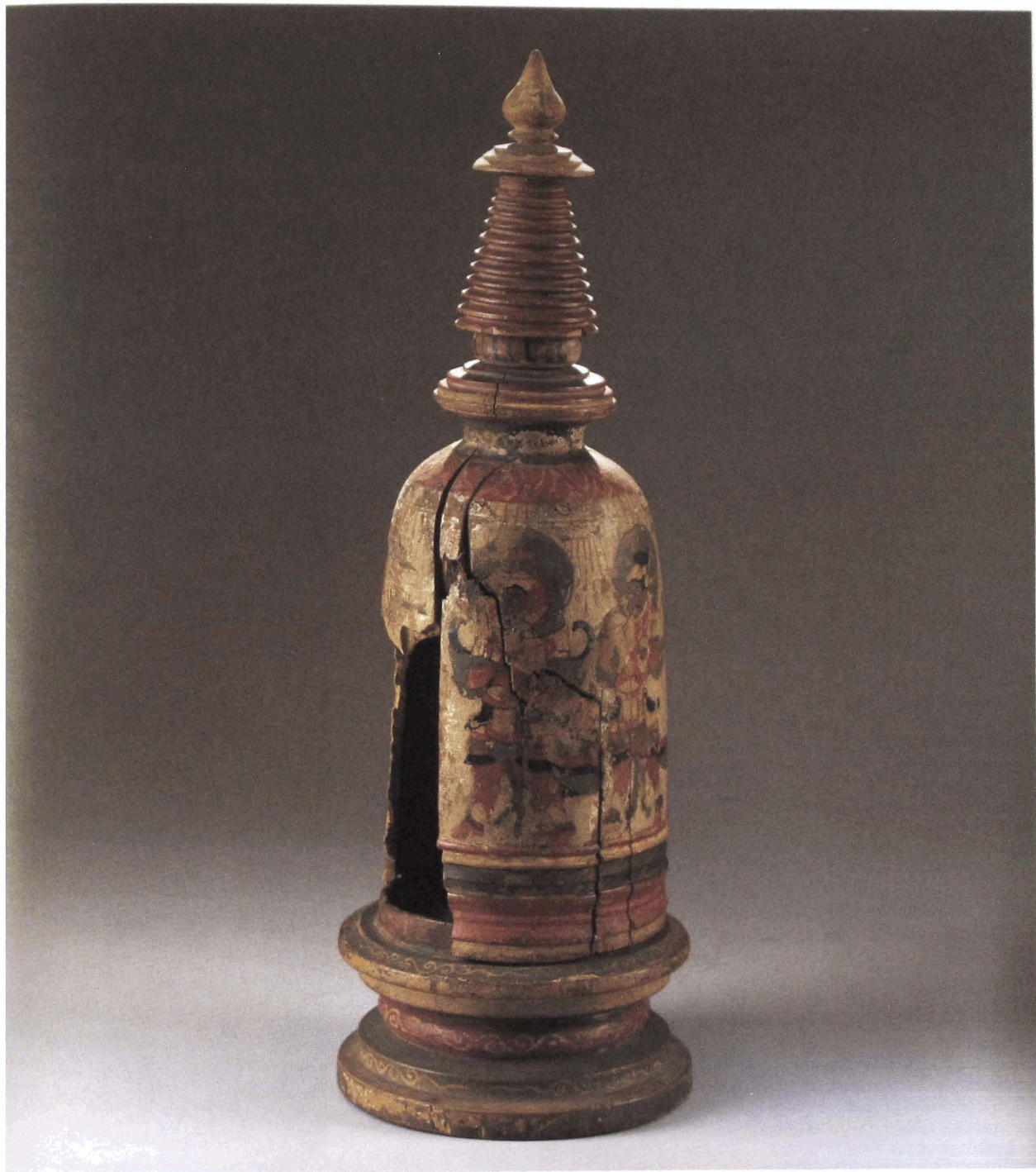
This particular shape is typical of those produced in Eastern India in the tenth to twelfth centuries. The iconography of the four *lokapālas* depicted on it is typical of objects from Khara Khoto; the headpieces of various manuscripts and xylographs in the collection are also decorated with the figure of one of the *lokapālas*. Curiously, in works from Khara Khoto, the *lokapālas* are always depicted in their Chinese form, with the result that on occasions an illustration in the Tibetan style is accompanied by a *lokapāla* in the Chinese style. The combination here, therefore, of an Indian – or Indo-Nepalese-Tibetan – form of *stūpa* with Chinese protectors gives no occasion for surprise.

The four deities depicted are Vaiśravaṇa, Virūpākṣa, Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Virūḍhaka. All are wearing Chinese armour. Vaiśravaṇa is

holding a trident and a *stūpa*, Virūpākṣa is holding a jewel and a serpent, Dhṛtarāṣṭra is playing a lute, and Virūḍhaka has a sword and a lasso, with which to capture demons.

The splitting of the wood occurred while the *stūpa* was still in the “Illustrious” *suburgan*, and it is considered that any attempt at restoration would, by affecting the natural condition of the wood, only cause further damage. For this reason, it is displayed in its original state.

K.S.



Late 11th - early 12th century

Tangka fragment

On cotton

76.5 × 25 cm

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2353

Literature: Oldenburg, 1914, No. 2.

Rhie and Thurman, 1991, No. 21.

An exceptionally fine work, this *Padmapāṇi* Lokeśvara was believed by Oldenburg to have been originally the left-hand side of a larger *tangka*. All that remains of the central figure – about the identity of which we can only speculate – is a lotus petal and a rich black garment with intricately executed gold designs covering a knee.

This surviving fragment is itself made up of several pieces. In the upper left corner a patch of cloth with parts of painted lotuses has been sewn on, and two further patches have been added on the right-hand side, in the top corner and in the middle. This patching, as well as the worn and fragmentary condition, may suggest that this work is very old – possibly dating from before the 12th century.

The *bodhisattva* is white, with one head and two arms. He is presented full-face, but with the legs in profile. If he did originally stand to the right of a central figure, this would be the only instance in the Khara Khoto collection where such a figure is depicted full-face.

The right hand is lowered in an indeterminate *mudrā*, while the left hand holds the stem of a white lotus. The figure is richly ornamented, with flowers in the hair, a necklace and earrings, bracelets, and a long cord extending below the knees. A translucent scarf is draped nearly horizontally across the chest, and tied at the left shoulder.¹ The necklace, bracelets and scarf have parallels in the paintings of Ladakh.

The *tangka* has a charming simplicity,

particularly the smiling face, the elegant twist of the torso, and the stylised hands. It is one of the finest treasures in the collection, radiating the warm beauty of true art. It is not surprising that those who revered it did all they could to preserve every fragment of its disintegrating fabric. Stylistic parallels can be found in only one other item in the Khara Khoto collection, the fragment of an image of *Mañjuśrī*. (Cat. No. 18).

K.S.

¹See: K. Samosyuk, *The Art of the Tangut Empire*, in this catalogue.



Late 11th - early 12th century

Tangka fragment

On cotton

63 × 13.5 cm

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2359

Literature: Oldenburg, 1914, No. 43.

The Tibetan section of the Khara Khoto collection contains only two images of Mañjuśrī, though it is not easy to suggest why there are so few. It was Oldenburg who identified this particular *bodhisattva* as Mañjuśrī, though, as he himself recognised, "only with some considerable degree of probability." Originally part of a larger work, the edges of the piece indicate that it was cut from the parent work in Khara Khoto itself. It may also be that the whole image disintegrated except for this fragment.

The orange *bodhisattva* sits on an opulently decorated throne atop a multi-coloured lotus. His torso is bare; his necklaces, bracelets and splendid earrings coruscate with precious stones. The right hand is lowered (Oldenburg suggests in *varamudrā*); the left hand is lost. His throne was supported by white elephants with red headpieces and trunks. Oldenburg, who found this image delightful, described it as "wholly Indian in manner."

It is indeed every bit as perfect as the *Padmapāñī* (Cat. No. 17); the *bodhisattva's* smile is just as winning, the execution of the rounded face, the translucent scarf, the shining colour of the torso are just as fine. Both fragments are clearly the product of a single artistic school.

K.S.



Before 1227

Tangka

Silk tapestry, *kesi* technique

101 × 52.5 cm

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2362

Literature: Oldenburg, 1914.

Krechetova, 1969.

Lubo-Lesnichenko and Shafranovskaya,

1968, p. 2.

Béguin *et al.*, 1977, pl. 80.

Rhic and Thurman, 1991, No. 23.

De Mallman, 1975, p. 369.

Green Tārā is seated on a blue lotus (*utpala*), her right leg extended below the throne and resting on a lotus, her left – bent in *lalitāsana*. Her right arm is elegantly extended to the side, while the left hand holds a blue lotus. A similar lotus adorns her right side. Her nimbus and encompassing *mandorla* are white (possibly faded), the *mandorla* having a double border. Above the nimbus are two *hamsas*, with between them a lionlike face of glory (*kirttimukha*). Strings of pearl beads hang down around the throne, which rests on a lotus stem supported by *nāgas*. Tārā is seen against a blue background, surrounded by mountains. The treatment of the mountains is identical to that in other Khara Khoto *tangkas* of the Tibetan – or, more precisely, the Indo-Nepalese-Tibetan – school. Above the throne are the five *tathāgatas*, and immediately above them six trees – two each of three different types. These may be the *campaka*, *asoka* and *pārijāta* trees described in the *Sādhanamālā*.¹ Overall, however, *sādhana* SM 116 is different from this *tangka*.

Below and to the right of Tārā is Asokakantā (yellow two-armed form of Mārīcī, Goddess of the Dawn), standing under an *asoka* tree. Below and to the left of Tārā is blue Ekajātā, holding in her left hand a skull-bowl (*kapaḷa*), in her right a



curved knife (*kartrī*), and wearing a tiger-skin loincloth. Wide additional strips have been sewn on to the top and bottom of the *tangka*, on both of which four *dākinīs* are to be seen dancing and playing musical instruments – horn, flute and conch shell. The instrument held by the second figure from the left on both panels is unclear. The Khara Khoto collection contains one other small fragment of silk tapestry woven by the *kesi* technique. This technique, based on a tapestry-like weaving of threads, is commonly used in the Near East, but using wool, not silk. It was doubtless the Chinese who learned it from their Central Asian neighbours and applied it to silk. Small pieces of silk are woven separately, then joined, so that all the seams are visible when held up to the light. The Tārā was assumed to be a Chinese piece, until Professor E. Kychanov discovered a Tangut text, referring to studios using the *kesi* technique in Xi Xia. It can now be accepted as Tangut. The *tangka* is distinguished by its elegance of composition and line, subtlety of colour, and fine craftsmanship. It is one of the great treasures of the Khara Khoto collection.

K.S.

de Mallman, 1975, p. 369 [SM 116]



12th-early 13th century

Painting

On wood

130 × 108 cm

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2406

Literature: Oldenburg, 1914, No. 92.

The *maṇḍala*'s background is blue, and richly inscribed with Tangut hieroglyphs, which are in too poor a state of preservation to be read. The text is in all probability a *mantra*, an invocation of the goddess. The larger circle described within the rectangular frame is fiery red on the outside, has a centre made up of *vajras*, and an inner rim of lotus petals. This circle contains the palace of Uṣṇīṣavijayā – a square with gates placed to mark the four directions. The wall of the palace is three-tiered, the outer tier bearing the figures of sixteen dancing *ḍākinīs*. Inside each of the gates stand blue, two-armed, three-eyed guardians, with fiery hair, tigerskin(?) loincloths and fluttering scarves tossed over their shoulders. They are all holding a lasso in the left hand, which is in *tarjanīmudrā*, while in their right hands they are holding respectively (counting clockwise from the top) a rod, a hook, a sword and a *vajra*. On the gates are rams; to each side tusks spring from the gaping jaws of *makaras*; beyond the *makaras*, resting on unopened lotus flowers, are eight auspicious objects: (reading from the top) a vessel, a wheel of the law, a lotus, a parasol, an endless knot, a flag, a conch shell, and a fish. The square palace is divided into four triangles, red, blue, yellow and green, and within it is described another circle with a rainbow-coloured rim. The inner circle contains, in a *caitya*, seated in *padmāsana* (on a lotus throne), white Uṣṇīṣavijayā. She has three faces (white, yellow and blue), three eyes on each face, and eight arms. In her right hands she is holding a double *vajra*, the

Buddha Amitābha on a red lotus, and an arrow, with the fourth hand in *varamudrā*. Her left hands are: in *tarjanīmudrā*, in *abbayamudrā*, holding a bow, and holding a *bhadrāghaṭa*. In her crown is Buddha Vairocana. To each side on red lotuses stand traditionally dressed and decorated *bodhisattvas*: on her right, white Avalokiteśvara with a lotus and a vessel, on her left, blue Vajrapāṇi, with a lotus bearing a *vajra*. In front of Uṣṇīṣavijayā is the kneeling figure of a deity with a red parasol, and to each side of the *caitya*, at the top, are two figures pouring liquid from vessels.

Outside the outer circle, in each corner, is a deity holding in his right hand a sack with a mongoose head.

In the left hand each has an individual attribute: the red figure has a tray with a golden vessel, the white – a white lotus, the blue – a tray with a golden cup, and the red and yellow – a tigerskin banner.

In the bottom right-hand corner, in a white rectangle, stands the figure of the Tangut donor. His name, in Tangut, is inscribed in a red cartouche.

K.S. (Based on Oldenburg)



12th - early 13th century

Painting

On wood

111 × 131 cm

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2407

Literature: Oldenburg, 1914, No. 93.

Béguin *et al.*, 1977, n.p.

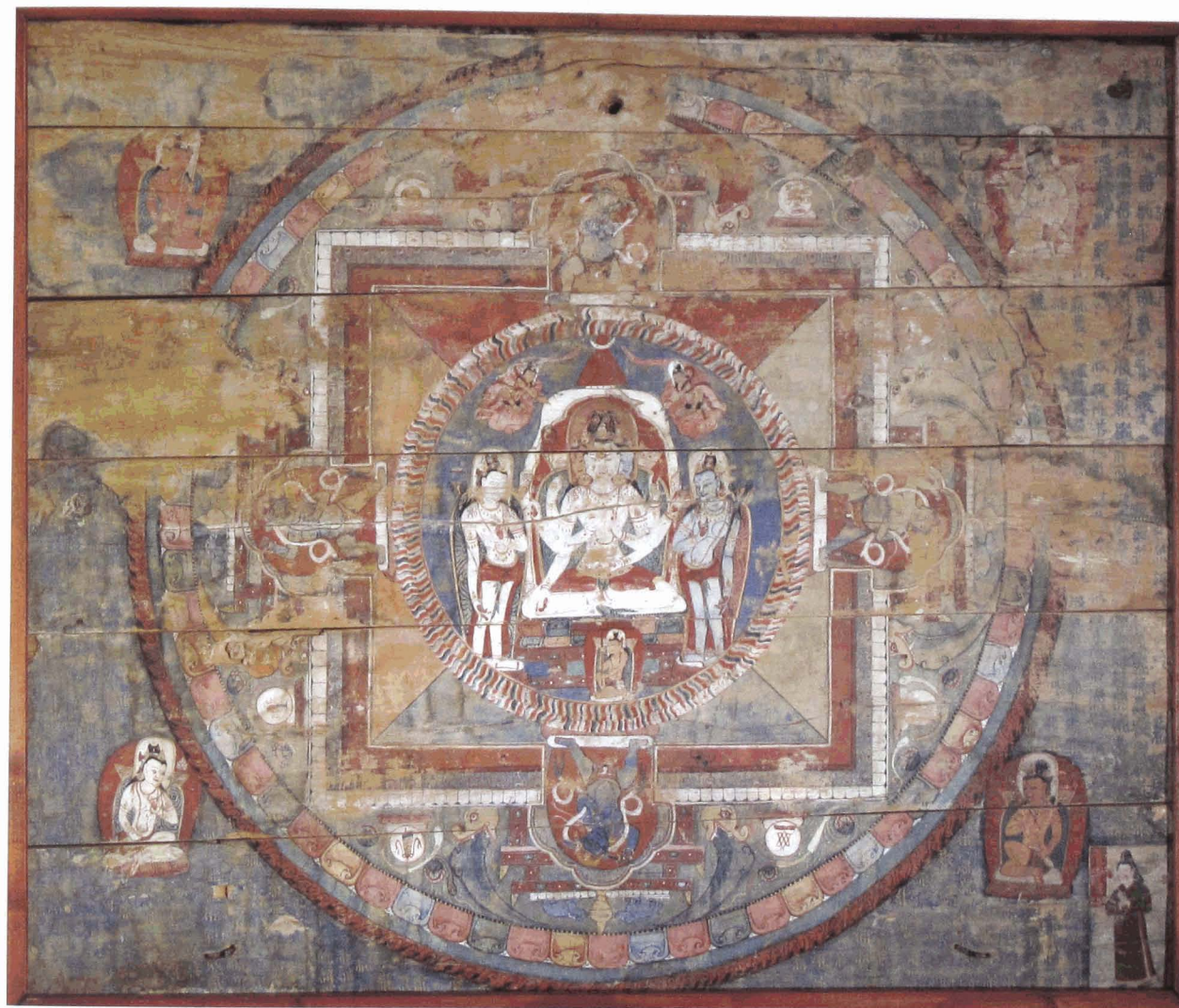
This *maṇḍala* is practically identical to catalog number 20. The donor here is a woman in a brown dress with a black floral design, red edging, and split at the side. Her cheeks are rouged and her hair tied up in a bun with ribbons. Her hands, which hold a red flower, are together in prayer. Oldenburg noted that her dress is reminiscent of Uighur images from Eastern Turkestan. It is, however, no less similar to the Tangut costume of women donors on some of the other Khara Khoto images (see Cat. No. 49). An inscription gives the donor's first name and surname in Tangut, with the surname transcribed into Chinese Liang.¹

It is an intriguing possibility that this *maṇḍala*, and catalog number 20, were commissioned by a husband and wife. K.S.



¹As read by Dr. K.B. Keping.





After 1159

Tangka

On linen (?)

111.5 × 69 cm

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2393

Literature: Oldenburg, 1914, pp. 140-141.

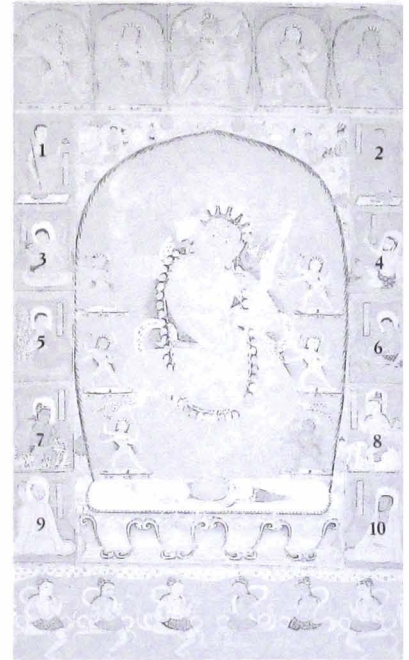
Béguin *et al.*, 1977, No. 28.

Rhie and Thurman, 1991, No. 93.

Vajravārāhī, the Diamond Sow (Phagmo), belongs to the circle of Saṃvara deities. In the Khara Khoto paintings she is depicted either alone or as the *prajñā* of Saṃvara, against a background of cemeteries, or without them. She is the personification of the female energy of Saṃvara. Here red Vajravārāhī stands on her left leg in a dancing pose, trampling the prostrate yellow body of Bhairava, whose head is turned slightly to the left. The goddess wears a crown of skulls; on the central skull is a *cakra* lying on a half-moon. To the right of her face is the head of a blue sow, which is in a poor state of preservation. She is wearing a white flowered scarf and a garland of human heads. She has gold earrings, and gold bracelets on her arms, wrist, hips and ankles. Elegant bone ornaments cover her breast and thighs. In her right hand she is holding a *kartīṣkā* with a *vajra* haft, and in her left a skull bowl. In the crook of her left arm she is carrying a *khaṭvāṅga* staff topped by three skulls and a *vajra*. She is standing on a red disc on the body of Bhairava, who is lying on a white moon disc, supported by a multicoloured lotus flower with double petals. She is surrounded by a *mandorla* with tongues of flame. Within the *mandorla* are six figures, all lunging to the right and trampling the same figure as Vajravārāhī. The three to her right are red, green and blue; those to her left are yellow, white and dark blue. All except the red figure have one face and four arms. They are each

holding a *ḍamaru*, a *kartīṣkā*, a *khaṭvāṅga*, and a skull bowl. The red figure is different in that she has three faces and six arms, and is holding, in addition to the objects held by the other five, a whip and a lasso. These six escorts may represent syllables in Vajravārāhī's *mantra*. The *mandorla* stands against a background of eight cemeteries, denoted by eight *stūpas*, eight trees, severed limbs and tiny yogins.

In the centre of the upper row Saṃvara is embracing Vajravārāhī (*yab-yum*), flanked on each side by two four-armed *dākinīs*. Their coloration suggests that they may represent the Four Directions; green – The North, red – The West, yellow – The South, and blue – The East. The vertical side panels contain ten figures in all, each with its own frame, and its own red drapery with a gold flower pattern. The frames contain empty cartouches, which, judging by their vertical configuration, were intended for hieroglyphs. It may be that the *tangka* was painted in Tibet especially for the Tanguts, by an artist who did not know Tangut hieroglyphic writing, and it was intended that the inscriptions be added in Xi Xia. Frames 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 contain five Great Adepts (*mahāsiddhas*) of Indian origin; in frame 5 there is a Tibetan monk. Frame 8 has Indrabhūti, the ruler of Uḍḍiyāna, in a crown and wearing the ornamentations of a *bodhisattva*, riding on a white elephant and in the company of his *prajñā*. Oldenburg identified this figure as Indra or Samantabhadra – an understandable mistake, since the elephant is *vāhana* for both deities. In later iconography (see Egued A. 1984) Buddha Vajradhara heads the 84 *siddhas*, while the central position (Cat. No. 43) in the xylograph mentioned) is reserved for Indrabhūti: moreover, unlike the other *siddhas*, he, as one who inherited the doctrine directly from Buddha Vajradhara (or, according to an alternative tradition, was actually its prime source), occupies a







whole page of the xylograph. Directly opposite Indrabhūti in our own *tangka* is the figure of Ḍombī Heruka (frame 7), whose iconography – mounted on a tiger and escorted by a *prajñā* – was to remain unchanged for many centuries, recurring even in an 18th century xylograph. The Khara Khoto *tangka* is, however, the earliest known example of this iconography. Oldenburg identifies the Great Adept in frame 6 as Luipa, preparing fish, and in frame 4 as Virūpa who “halted the motion of the sun.” Frame 3 shows a *siddha* with his *prajñā*; the absence of attributes renders him unidentifiable. Like Luipa and the figures in frames 9 and 10, he is sitting against a stylised cliff or rock, whose curved form recurs in later Tibetan paintings. The monk in frame 5 enjoys the privilege of sitting amongst the Indian *mahāsiddhas*. He is clearly Tibetan, and is sitting against a rock quite different from those in frames 3, 6, 9, and 10. Who is this solitary monk? And who are the figures in frames 9 and 10? In the absence of inscriptions we can do no more than speculate. The monk may be Milarepa, a famously gifted *siddha*, an initiate in the *tantra* of Vajravārāhī (like all the other figures around him), whose name and writings are mentioned in Tangut texts from Khara Khoto.¹ He is usually depicted wearing a white robe, but here we may have a very early representation, predating the establishment of a fixed iconography for him.

The two figures in frames 9 and 10 are both dressed in monk’s robes. The light-skinned figure in 9 must be assumed to be Tibetan, the dark-skinned figure in 10 – Indian. Both are seated in identical poses. On a red rug next to the figure in 10 stands a *vajra* and bell. No *mudrā* is discernible. The Khara Khoto *tangkas* frequently feature, in their bottom corners, an Indian and a Tibetan teacher and disciple. The Tangut archive of the Institute of Oriental Studies,

St. Petersburg contains Tangut translations of the *Six Doctrines* of Nāropa. The famous Marpa-lozava, who was a disciple of Nāropa, was held to be an incarnation of Ḍombī Heruka (*The Blue Annals*, 1979, pp. 404), who is depicted in frame 7, immediately above the light-skinned figure. It was Marpa who translated, *inter alia*, the *Six Doctrines* of Nāropa and disseminated his teaching in Tibet, and who also founded the school of bKa-brgyud-pa and passed on the doctrine to his four disciples. The most outstanding of these four disciples was Milarepa, who was initiated by his teacher into the *Paramasukha Cakrasaṃvara*, as well as the *Six Doctrines* of Nāropa. *Mahāsiddhas* were particular objects of veneration by adepts of the Karma-pa sect, of which bKha-brgyud-pa was a branch. There is chronological support also for this speculative identification of the three figures concerned: Marpa died in 1096, Milarepa in 1123, and in 1159 monks of the Karma-pa sect were received at the court of the Tangut emperor.

It may indeed even be that this *tangka*, together with the *Paramasukha Cakrasaṃvara Yab-Yum Luipa Maṇḍala* (Cat. No. 26), were brought in 1159 to Xi Xia by the two young Tibetans depicted in frames 1 and 2. They are depicted without nimbuses, indicating that they are living teachers. One is holding a staff and an alms-bowl – attributes of a pilgrim, while the other has two *vajras*.

A comparison of this Vajravārāhī with the Saṃvara (Cat. No. 26) indicates that they belong to different central Tibetan schools – or rather that they were painted in different monasteries. It is the fine detail which gives this away. The tongues of flame, the lotus petals, the way in which the human heads are attached to the deity’s garland, all differ. In the hair of the Saṃvara, a double *vajra* is placed above

the crescent moon, whereas here (central frame, upper row), those positions are reversed. Such apparently minor detail is often crucial in attributing the paintings, since each monastic school had its own conventions.

K.S.

¹Nevsky, 1960, vol. 1.

Late 12th - early 13th century

Tangka

On silk

80 × 53 cm

(with original mounting 130 × 64 cm)

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2363

Literature: Oldenburg, 1914, No. 47, p. 47.

Mārīcī, three-headed (one a pig's head) and ten-armed, is standing on a large lotus throne. Under her feet are four evil spirits in the form of women. The lotus throne is mounted on the backs of six pigs, in the centre of which is the spirit of the Earth, holding the discs of the Sun and Moon. She has a double halo; a small one round the head, and a large one framed by a strip with a floral design. The deity is resting on clouds which hang low over the earth. Her upper pair of hands hold the discs of Sun and Moon, the next pair a bow and arrows, and, of the bottom pair, one is in

vitarkamudrā, the other holds a necklace. She has two pairs of hands across her chest. Her right upper hand holds a *vajra*, the left holds a branch. A Mārīcī with similar iconography is described by de Mallman.¹ The lower part of the *tangka* has, on the right, a landscape with mountains and small flora, and, on the left, two donors – a man holding a censer, and a woman, her hands together in prayer and clasping a bouquet of flowers.

Mārīcī is a female deity sharing equal status with the *bodhisattvas*. She is Queen of the Sky, Goddess of the Dawn and the Rising sun, one of whose most important functions is to protect against all manner of danger – hunger, illness, war, death and the machinations of evil spirits. The attributes in her central and lower hands are connected with her particular skill in catching devils.

This *tangka* was without question painted locally, in Xi Xia. Although it adheres broadly to the iconographic canon, there

are minor infractions – six pigs instead of seven, for example.² Above all, it was clearly painted to order; the couple who commissioned it, shown in the bottom left-hand corner, have distinctive portrait-like features.

At the same time the rural scene with its mountains and tiny flora gives the *tangka* a unique local flavour.

Given the traditional role of Mārīcī, the function of the *tangka* was undoubtedly to offer protection against sickness and evil spirits. This would explain the figures of the small child and its parents.

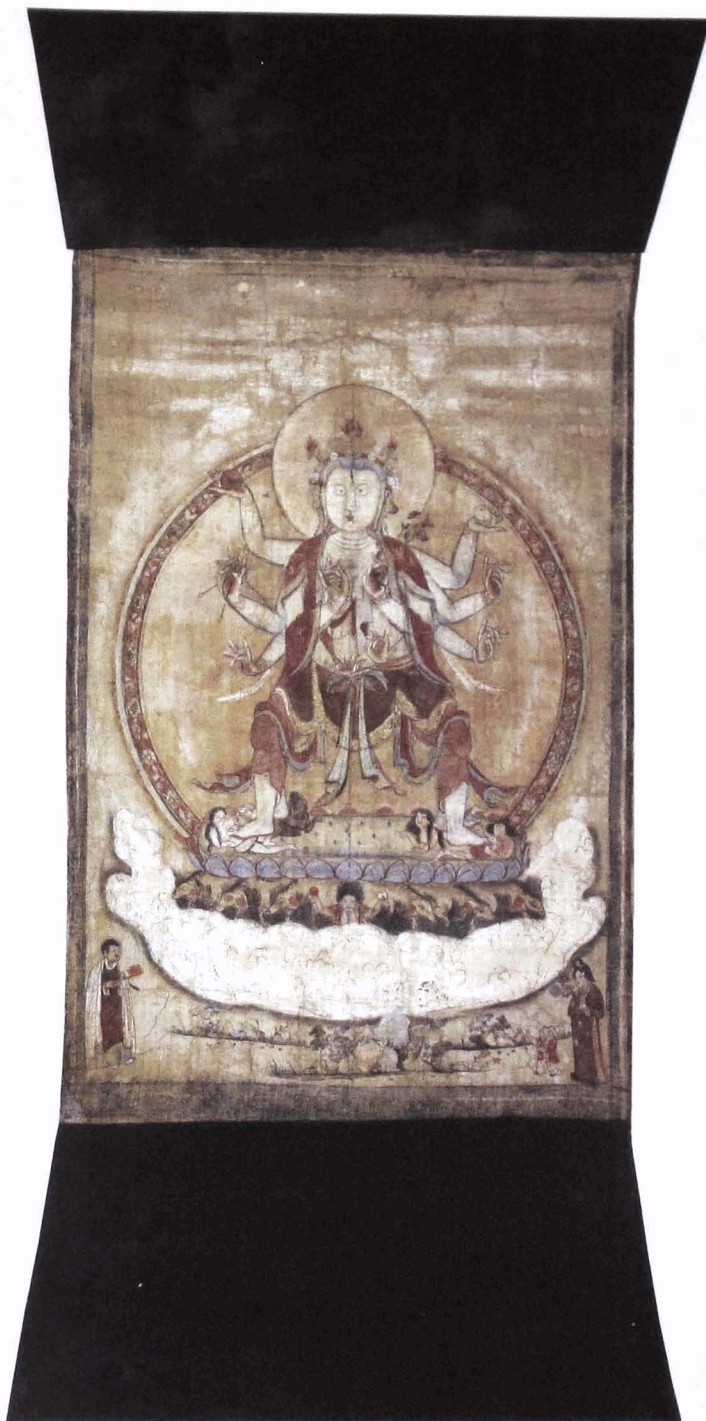
The cult of Mārīcī was widespread in both China and Tibet.

M.R.

¹See: de Mallman, 1975, p. 263.

²The number seven may have alluded to the stars in the constellation Ursa Major, with which Mārīcī was traditionally associated. Alternatively, it may have alluded to the seven horses which pulled the chariot of the sun-god Sūrya – since Mārīcī was associated also with Aurora, Goddess of the Dawn.





13th century

Tangka

On linen

48 × 42 cm

(with original mounting 81 × 45 cm)

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2364

Three-faced, three-headed, eight-armed Sitātapatrā is depicted standing on a lotus, with, behind her, a throne framed with a stylised floral design. She has an oval nimbus and a *mandorla* in the form of a flaming lotus petal. She is wearing a crown in her hair, and golden disc earrings. Her four right hands are holding, reading from the top: a book (?), a *cakra*, an arrow (?) and (?). In her left she has: a parasol,¹ a *vajra*, a bow – while the fourth hand is in *tarjanīmudrā*.

At the top of the *tangka*, behind the *mandorla*, is a branch with three stylised leaves, and down the sides are stylised long stems with flowers and leaves, and a fine floral design. These decorative elements are

an excellent illustration of Nepalese influence in Tibetan painting.²

In all four corners are figures of Vighnāntaka, standing on lotus thrones. Each has his left hand in *tarjanīmudrā*, while his right holds a *vajra*. At the bottom are five dancing *ḍākinīs* bearing sacrificial gifts – a cup, an incense stick, a lamp and food. Below are a monk in *abhayamudrā* and a donor with a *tufa* hairstyle, carrying a censer.

Sitātapatrā is considered to have the status of a *bodhisattva*.

The iconography of the Khara Khoto *tangka* corresponds to her *sādhana*. The attributes in all her eight hands symbolise the exorcism of devils and protection from disease.

M.R.

¹The parasol is Sitātapatrā's main attribute, under which she shelters and protects all true believers. It is also a symbol of compassion.

²The Nepalese school played a large part in the development of the Tibetan school of religious art. Its influence reached a peak between the eighth and fourteenth centuries.



12th-13th century

Tangka fragment

On silk

67 × 53 cm

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2386

Literature: Oldenburg, 1914, No. 72.

Red, three-headed, four-armed Kurukullā stands on a prostrate human figure atop a white moon circle. With two arms she draws a bow entwined with flowers, firing an arrow of flowers. In her second right hand she holds a severed head; her second left hand rests on her hip. On her head she has a garland of severed heads, with ornaments on her breast, arms and legs. The background is a stylised floral design, which is to be found on several other silk *tangkas* in the Tibetan style. We may presume that they all came from the same studio. The five figures at the top of the *tangka* were probably Buddhas. Below the goddess, as Oldenburg comments, “is a rather unusual depiction of the seven jewels of a *cakravartin* – world sovereign: in the middle, on a green lotus, in a rainbow nimbus, is a sword, which presumably symbolises a military leader. To the left, on a red lotus, is a human figure which has been almost obliterated; this is the sovereign’s counsellor. To the right, also on a red lotus, is what must be the sovereign’s wife. Next to the left is a horse, next to the right – an elephant. On the extreme left is the wheel of the world sovereign, and on the extreme right – jewels. Below are three dancing women on a rug. In the left bottom corner is a dark-faced monk with a yellow robe and a white hat, with altar furniture laid out before him. Opposite the monk are two donors, a man and a woman. The flowery bow and arrows of Kurukullā can be explained by the *tangka*’s function as an appeal for assistance in an affair of the heart. The depiction of the goddess

does not correspond to her *sādhana*.”

Snellgrove has also described the Kurukullā and her function.¹ She is invoked, he writes, “for gaining mastery of a young woman.”

Her *sādhana* is the means by which “all beings are brought into subjection... This goddess arises from the syllable HRĪH, is red in colour, with four arms, and in her hands she holds a bow, an arrow, a blue lotus, and a hook. By merely meditating upon her one brings the threefold world to subjection. By 100,000 recitations of her *mantra* one reduces kings, by 10,000 the people, by 10 million the cattle and *yakṣas*, by 70,000 the titans, by 200,000 the gods, and *yogins* by 100.”

K.S.

¹Snellgrove, 1959, pp. 54, 87.



After 1159

Tangka

On linen (?)

98 × 69 cm

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2369

Literature: Oldenburg, 1914.

Béguin *et al.*, 1977, No. 30.

Rhie and Thurman, 1991, No. 92.

Paramasukha Cakrasaṃvara – Saṃvara for short – is the most important *yidam* in esoteric Buddhism. Saṃvara was adopted into the Buddhist pantheon from Shivaism, and is the tantric form of Śiva. He is one of the forms of Hevajra; his *tantra* was studied in all the Tibetan schools of Buddhism, and his cult was popular also among the Tangut. This *tangka* can be regarded as a *maṇḍala* of deities; despite the lack of geometrical composition and projection within its design of a sacred palace (*maṇḍala*), it is organised on the basis of the four quadrants of the globe.

At its centre blue Saṃvara, with four faces and twelve arms, stands upon the disc of the sun above a multicoloured lotus, against the background of a *mandorla* of fiery red flames. The central face, turned to The East (*i.e.* facing us), is blue; that facing to the figure's right, The South, is yellow; that facing to the left, The North, is green; and that facing backwards, to The West, is red. The hair is gathered in a topknot, and decorated with a crescent moon, a *viśuvavajra*, and a wish fulfilling gem *cintāmaṇi*. On his brow he wears a diadem of skulls, around his neck a necklace of beads fashioned from human bones and a garland of severed heads. He is bedecked with jewellery, and has a tiger-skin loincloth. The upper pair of hands are holding an elephant skin stretched out behind his back. The remaining hands, counting anti-clockwise from his upper right, are holding a drum (*ḍamaru*), an axe,

a *kartṭikā*, a trident, a four-faced head of Brahma, a lasso, a skull-bowl (*kapāla*) and a staff (*khaṭvāṅga*). The two hands behind his consort's back hold a *vajra* and a bell. With his right foot he is trampling the pink goddess Kālarātrī, with his left – the blue deity Bhairava.

Saṃvara is depicted in the embrace of his consort (*prajñā*) Vajravārāhī.

She is red, with one face and three eyes, bedecked with ornaments, wearing a garland of skulls, and with her customary attributes.

The flame *mandorla* is set in a rectangular frame, filled with scenes from the eight cemeteries – the *śmaśānas*, the sacred cremation sites of India

(see Cat. Nos. 28, 29).

In frames surrounding the central field are deities of the *Luipa Sixty-Two Deity Maṇḍala*, with two additional deities, all set against a background of flames. Those in the upper left corner have been lost, but iconographic norms allow us to determine who they were.

Looking first at the deities representing the four cardinal, and four intervening, directions, we can identify: (35) blue Kākāsyā, crow-faced protector of The East; (4) red Śvānāsyā, dog-faced protector of The West; (19) yellow Sūkarāsyā, pig-faced protector of The South (the face is lost); (20) green Ulūkāsyā, owl-faced protector of The North; (1) yellow and red Yamadūtī, protector of the South-west; (7) red and green Yamadaṃṣṭrī, protector of The North-west; (32) blue and yellow Yamadadhī – protector of The South-east; (38) blue and green Yamamāthanī, protector of The North-east.

Next – four *yoginīs* of the inner great bliss circle: (8) yellow Rūpiṇī; (14) red Khaṇḍarohā; (25) a blue *ḍākinī*; (31) green Lama Yoginī.

Next – eight Hero-Heroine couples, personifying the body circle: White 2, 6, 10, 12, 15, 16, 33, 37. Then – eight Hero-





Heroine couples, personifying the speech circle: red 9, 13, 17, 18, 23, 24, 27, 29. Then – eight Hero-Heroine couples personifying the mind circle: pale blue 3, 5, 21, 22, 26, 30, 34, 36. Top and bottom centre are: (11) blue Samvara Heruka, and (28) blue one-headed, four-armed Acala (first identified by Oldenburg). Acala is recognisable by his attributes – a cord in his hair, the cup of blood held in his main arms, the sword in his secondary right hand and the staff with tortoises in his secondary left hand. Acala is the protector of the *maṇḍala* as a whole, though he is not normally associated with Samvara and does not appear with him in the aids to meditation known as *sādhana*s. K.S.

¹The *maṇḍala* has been defined by Rhie. See also Roerich, 1949, p. 385.





12th-13th century

Tangka

On silk

63.5 × 44 cm

the State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2371

Literature: Oldenburg, 1914, No. 57.

This *tangka* is one of a group of *tangkas* from Khara Khoto (to which Cat. Nos. 25 and 32 also belong) produced in the same monastic studio, possibly inside the Tangut Empire. All of the *tangkas* are on silk and have the same background of twining lotuses.

Though sharing the same subject as catalog number 26, this *tangka* is quite different both in style and iconography.

At its centre is two-armed, one-headed blue Saṃvara, embracing Vajravārāhī. His arms are crossed in the diamond gesture; his right hand holds a *vajra*, his left hand is obscured by the hair of his *prajñā*, but should hold a bell. On his head is a crown of five skulls, and his topknot is tipped

with a golden ornament. From behind his back we catch a glimpse of his *khaṭvāṅga*, which is decorated with skulls and a *vajra*. Below is a garland of severed heads.

A red, one-faced Vajravārāhī holds a sacrificial knife with *vajra* in her right hand; her right leg is thrown across Saṃvara's thigh; her shoulders and thighs are decorated with a gauze-like material, now barely visible. She is trampling two tiny deities – a yellow male and blue female, both holding skull-bowls filled with blood. At the top of this *tangka* are five Buddhas, different only in their *mudrās*.

At the bottom are three dancing *ḍākinīs*, bearing gifts. In each bottom corner is a monk.

Iconographically, this *tangka* is very close to a bronze sculpture of the same period in the Zimmerman collection.¹ The poor condition of the Khara Khoto *tangka* renders impossible any useful comment about its artistic qualities.

K.S.

¹Rhie and Thurman, 1991, No. 68.



Late 12th-13th century

Tangka fragment

On silk

52.5 × 54 cm

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2409

Literature: Oldenburg, 1914.

The central area of the *maṇḍala*, containing the deity to whom the work is dedicated, has deteriorated so badly that identification is difficult. It would appear to be a *yab-yum* couple, coloured blue (or black) and green. The central figure is surrounded by six petals, in each of which is a *ḍākinī*. The circle surrounding the six petalled flower is contained within a square 'palace', which is itself within a larger circle. The broad outer circle of the *maṇḍala* is divided into eight segments, all holding cemetery scenes (see Cat. No. 29). This is contained within a square, divided diagonally into four triangles. At the base is a horizontal frieze with seven *ḍākinīs* dancing and playing musical instruments. In the bottom left-hand corner is a dark-faced figure dressed in white with a gold hat and, to his left, is a vase. The colour of the hat is unusual and would normally be associated with a formal lay costume. For all that, the figure may be assumed to be an intermediary between the Tangut donor – who commissioned the work, immortalised his name in an inscription and is depicted at prayer in the bottom right-hand corner – and the deity. This work widens our understanding of the functions of a *maṇḍala*. Rituals involving *maṇḍalas*, such as meditation and initiation rites, are well known, and have been described widely by scholars. The *maṇḍala*'s function as cosmogram has always seemed to preclude its use for profane purposes. The ritualistic evocation of a deity and the meditative process using a *maṇḍala* is not available to each and every believer, but only to those who have

undergone a complete training of body, consciousness and psyche. With the aid of a teacher, these specific believers have been initiated into more than one esoteric tantra. The donor figure here cannot himself establish contact with, or make a request of, the deity without the assistance of an intermediary. This supposition may seem to lack substantiation. *The Blue Annals*, however, offer support in the form of a story of a childless king, who turned to an intermediary who had achieved wisdom. The intermediary duly prayed to Saṃvara, and in the same year a son was born to the king.¹ It follows then that one might understandably turn to tutelary deities with a request for assistance. There is a possibility that this is in fact a *maṇḍala* of Saṃvara and Vajravāhī² in which case the six *ḍākinīs* or *yoginīs* occupying the six points of the Wheel of the Double Triangle are called Śriherukī, Vajrabhairavī, Ghoracaṇḍī, Vajrabhāskarī, Vajraraudrī and Vajraḍākinī. Their presence is so to personify the six syllables of the *mantra*.
K.S.

¹Roerich, 1949, p. 96.

²See: de Mallman, 1975, p. 471.



Samvara Maṇḍala

Late 12th-13th century

Tangka

On cotton

78 × 65 cm

(with original mounting 100 × 72 cm)

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2408

Literature: Oldenburg, 1914.

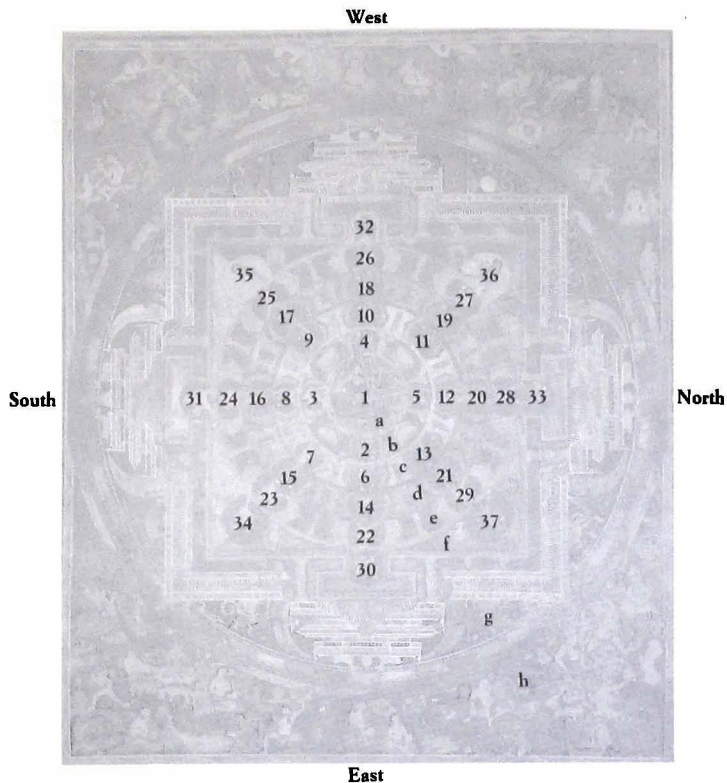
The *maṇḍala* on this *tangka* consists of five concentric circles set within a square divided by invisible diagonals into four triangles; this square is set within a further circle, which is in turn set within a rectangle. The longer sides of the rectangle are the verticals. For convenience, the various areas of the *maṇḍala*, reading outwards from the centre, have been labelled with the letters a to h.

Sixty-two deities in all are depicted, together with another sixteen figures along the sides of the square, which Tucci identified as "sixteen sciences, the multiform eternal adoration, the beatitude that is the mark of liberty reconquered."¹

Finally, outside the eastern gates are the figures of a monk and a *siddha*.

At the heart of the *maṇḍala* (a) is black Saṃvara embracing red Vajravārāhī (1). In the next circle (b) are four pairs of deities; the places they occupy correspond to the four cardinal points. This is the inner circle of Great Bliss, in which we find at the bottom (in The East), a black or blue *ḍākinī* (2), to the right of the central figure (in The South), yellow Rūpiṇī (3), at the top (in The West), red Khaṇḍarohā (4), and in The North, green Lāmā Yoginī (5). Alternating with these four pairs of deities are skull cups filled with the four beverages of bliss: awakening – *bodhicitta*, blood, ambrosia, and the drink which gives the five enlightenments.

Each of the next three rings (c,d,e) contains eight pairs of deities: (c) is the circle of the body; (d) is the circle of speech; and (e) is



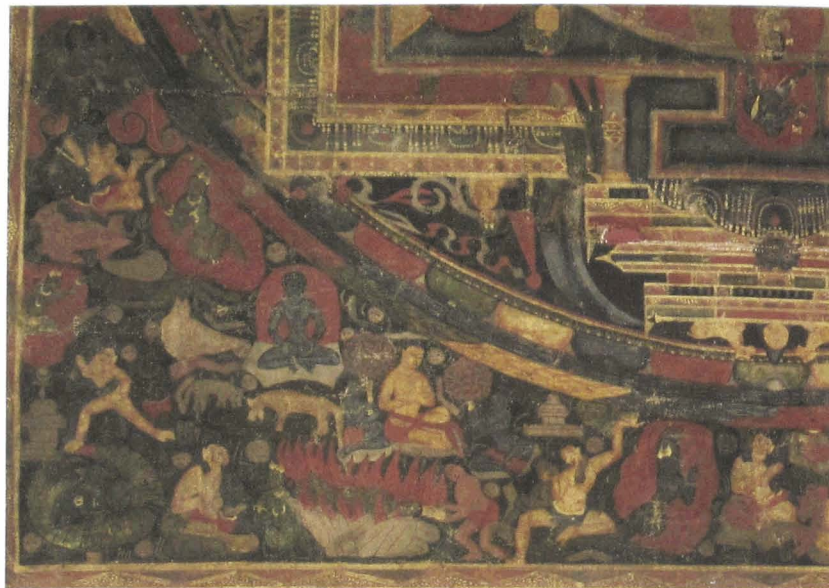


the circle of consciousness. The pairs of deities in (c) are white, in (d) – red; and in (e) – blue.

Outside the rim of the largest circle, in the spaces marked (f), are four animal-faced guardians of the gates with four twin-coloured goddesses in between. The guardian of the eastern gate is black crow-faced Kākāsyā (30); the southern gate is guarded by yellow sow-faced Sūkārāsyā (31); the western gate red dog-faced Śvānāsyā (32); and the northern gate green owl-faced Ullūkāsyā. The intervening directions are protected by goddesses whose twin coloration reflects the colours of the guardians to either side of them. These deities are all placed within the *mandala*, the sacred residence of a deity, surrounded by five-coloured walls with gates. Over the gates are eleven roofs, on the uppermost of which is – the Wheel of the Law (*cakra*), flanked by two deer alluding to the Buddha Śakyamuni's first sermon in the deer park at Benares.

The *mandala* is fringed by a row of open-petalled lotuses, beyond which lies a depiction of the Eight Cemeteries. Indian and Tibetan *yogins* practised meditation in cemeteries, and this subsequently became part of the compulsory ritual of monastic life. The cemeteries symbolise profane existence; meditation in cemeteries was designed to liberate the believer from all sense of the transience and illusoriness of existence and of regret for life. The Eight Cemeteries in esoteric belief symbolise the eight aspects of individual consciousness: five are the products of experience as registered by the five senses. The other three cemeteries are, as Tucci puts it, "intellective consciousness, the thinking faculty of the individual in itself and by itself, and the store consciousness which gathers together and retains both individual and collective experiences."

The cemeteries are depicted in accordance with an iconography common to several



works in the Khara Khoto collection. The only variations are minor. In each cemetery there are scenes of corpses being torn by wild animals or of a cremation. Each features a tree, a river, a *stupa* and a *yogin* sunk in meditation. One interesting iconographical feature of this particular *tangka* is the fantastic beast sitting in the crown of the tree.

The *mandala* of Samvara from Khara Khoto follows the same pattern as *mandalas* of the same deity in the *mandala* temple of Toling in Western Tibet. In pantheon and iconography it is practically identical to the *Paramasukha Cakrasamvara Yab-Yum Tappa Mandala* (Cat. No. 26) and similar in many respects to the *vadbana* from Nishpanayogavoli.⁴

K S

⁴See: Tucci, 1961, p. 137

Pad., p. 40

Pad., p. 136, pl. 2

de Mallman, 1975, pp. 50-51



Early 13th century
Xylograph
66.5 × 42 cm
The State Hermitage Museum,
St. Petersburg
X-2537

Vighnāntaka, three-eyed and two-armed, is depicted trampling Gaṇeśa, who is spreadeagled on a lotus throne. His bristling hair is surrounded by a garland of skulls, and over his forehead is a Buddha figure. His right hand holds a *vajra*, his left hand is in *tarjanāmudrā*.

He is set against a background of flames, in which are ten dancing *ḍākinīs*, holding in their right hands a variety of objects intended to frighten off enemies of the faith – a *vajra*, a sword, a cord, a bow and a mountain. At the top are five *dhyānibuddhas*, and above them four inscriptions, three Chinese and one Sanskrit. At the bottom are five *ḍākinīs* bearing sacrificial gifts – a bouquet of flowers, a candle, a lamp, a shell, and a mountain.

The Sanskrit inscription is a formulaic address to Mahākāla. It is in an unusual script, reminiscent of popular late *landja*, and showing clearly the carver's general lack of skill, as well as in handling this particular alphabet.

Certain *ākṣaras* are incorrectly formed, while parts of other words have not been completely cut, and proper intervals have not been maintained. For example, in one case of a long 'ā' the form of the *ākṣara* is unclear, because the paint has smudged in printing.

The inscription reads: *om/cha/nda/ma/ha/ra/jña/na/hum/pha*, meaning: "Om! Fierce Great Lord, hum, please defend."

The Chinese inscription reads: *an zan da mo he lang zhe na hong fa da*. If we compare the two inscriptions, we see that the Chinese represents a sort of phonetic transcript of the Sanskrit.

Thus, the syllable *om*, which usually precedes Buddhist prayers and invocations, is conveyed by the Chinese hieroglyph *an* – the first sound of Buddhist prayers in China.

The word *chanda* is conveyed by *zan*¹ and *da*.

The word *maha* is conveyed by *mo* and *he*.

The word *radzhan* is conveyed by *lan* (which is equivalent to *la*,² i.e. corresponds to the Sanskrit *ra* – since there is no 'r' sound in Chinese), *zhe* and *na*.

The syllable *hum* is conveyed by *hong*

The exclamation *pha* is conveyed by *fa* and *da*. To right and left of these parallel inscriptions are two hieroglyphic inscriptions. A few uncertain strokes betray the carver's lack of real skill in cutting Chinese characters.

On the right, in the most honoured position, are the four hieroglyphs *huang di wan sui*, meaning [May] the Emperor [live] ten thousand years!

On the left are four more: *go tai min an* – Peace to the people, grandeur to the state! The two slogans clearly make a pair, and were borrowed from China.

The Sanskrit inscription refers to the great lord it addresses as Caṇḍa Mahārājana. The term *caṇḍa* – fierce – was no doubt used because Vighnāntaka was one of the fierce deities, while calling him Great Lord or Emperor may well be an echo of the title mentioned in the Chinese inscription. Vighnāntaka was famous as one who cleared away obstacles. It is unique not only for its size, but also for its bilingual inscription, which itself highlights the mingling of Indian and Chinese influences in Tangut culture.

Oldenburg identifies the deity as Mahākāla, while Grek, on the basis of *sādhana*s, considered him to be Vighnāntaka.³

It is worth noting that the iconographies of the two deities overlap in considerable measure, and occasionally coincide.
M.R.

¹According to Rozenburg's dictionary, the Chinese hieroglyph *zan* is phonetically equivalent to *chan*. (See: Rozenberg, 1916).

²*lan* is equivalent to *lā*. See: the appendix to *Kangxizidian*, 1953, p. 100.

³See: Bhattacharyya, 1968, p. 180.

大泰國

○ 諸王公大臣等 ○
祖登畔持嘶館局擊祖黃暗

歲萬帝皇



Early 13th century

Tangka

On cotton (?)

47 × 35 cm

(with original mounting 61 × 47 cm)

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2375

Literature: Oldenburg, 1914, No. 61, p. 53.

In the centre Acala is depicted half-kneeling on a lotus throne. The background of flames contains further miniature figures of Acala. The three-eyed, two-armed deity, dressed in a tiger-skin loincloth, carries a sword in his right hand, while his left is in *tarjanīmudrā*, with a cord. He has a crown with skulls and his hair is standing on end. Around his neck is a monk's cord, and he is wearing earrings and bracelets. There are serpents round his arms and legs, and a large serpent tossed across his shoulder. The background is a floral design.

At the top are five *dhyānibuddhas*, and at the bottom stands with sacrificial gifts – fruit, a shell, a lamp, a censer, a candle, and a tray of flowers. In the bottom right corner is a donor-monk with a lamp, and in the bottom left two donors – a married couple kneeling in prayer.

M.R.



Early 13th century

Tangka

On silk

73 × 56.3 cm

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2374

Literature: Oldenburg S.F., 1914, No. 60,
pp. 52-53.

Three-eyed, four-armed Acala stands on a triangle – symbol of fire – resting on its tip on a lotus throne.¹ The crown on his bristling hair is topped with a figure of the Buddha Akṣobhya, and decorated with a serpent and skulls.

He has earrings in the form of coiled serpents, wriggling serpents on his arms and legs and another round his neck. He is wearing a long scarf, a necklace of severed heads, and tiger-skin loincloth.

His upper right hand holds a branch with two fruit, the left hand – a trident. The lower right hand holds a sword, the left –

a *kapāla*. A flame rises behind his back.

In all four corners of the *tangka* are further tiny figures of Acala with the same iconography, except that he has only two hands, and is standing directly on the lotus throne, without the triangle. In his right hand he is holding, respectively, a cord, a sword, a knife or axe, and what appears to be a crook.

At the top of the *tangka* are five *dhyānibuddhas*, which represent the five heavenly spheres and compose the body of the universe.

Below, set against a floral fabric background are five 'dancing girls'² bearing sacrificial gifts – a flower, a stick of incense, a lamp, a shell and a bowl of fruit.

The background to the *tangka* is fabric ornamented with large long-stalked peony blossoms.

In the bottom corners are monks sitting on rugs in front of tables. One of them is in *abhayamudrā*.

M.R.

¹The iconography of Acala here must be a local one.

Available literature makes no reference to a one-faced, three-eyed, four-armed Acala standing on a triangle; nor are any analogies traceable for the fruit which he is holding in his upper right hand.

²They may be Tangut goddesses or *dākinīs*.

Transferred from Hinduism into the mythology of Tibetan Tantrism, *dākinīs* began to play a significant part in the yogic practices of adepts of Vajrayāna.

They were held to possess powers capable of awakening the dormant potential of the meditator. Buddhist Tantrism counted five higher-order *dākinīs*, who, together with the *dhyānibuddhas*, symbolised the polarity of male and female.





12th-13th century

Tangka

On silk

37.3 × 24.5 cm

(with original mounting 56 × 28 cm)

The State Hermitage Museum,

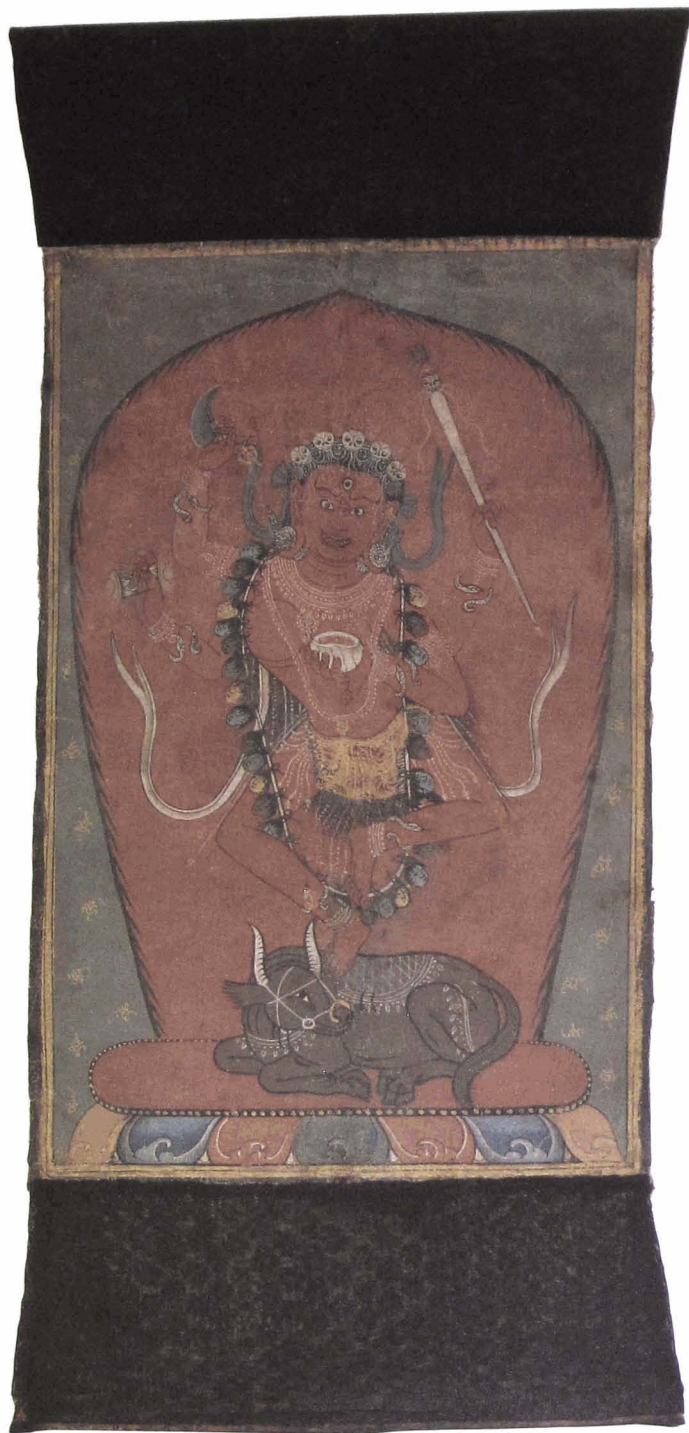
St. Petersburg

X-2395

Literature: Oldenburg, 1914, No. 81.

The *tangka* depicts a red, one-faced, three-eyed, four-armed *dākinī*, standing against a background of fire. Her right hands hold a sacrificial knife and a drum; her left hands – a rod and skull-bowl filled with blood. She is standing on one leg on the back of a brown bull, which is lying on a red cushion atop a multicoloured lotus. On her head she has a garland of five skulls; serpents hang from her ears in place of earrings, and are coiled round her wrists and ankles. From her shoulders hangs a garland of severed heads, and she has an animal skin loincloth. Oldenburg, on whose description this account is based, suggests that she may be a form of Yamiḍākinī.

K.S



Late 12th-13th century
Silk embroidery
On silk
56 × 32 cm
The State Hermitage Museum,
St. Petersburg
X-2397
Literature: Oldenburg, 1914, No. 83.

The workmanship of this piece of embroidery seems somewhat primitive, yet it is precisely the lack of finesse which gives it its particular charm. Against the background of a cemetery, a *dākinī* stands on her left leg on a prostrate figure, surrounded by flames. In her right hand she holds a sacrificial knife, in her left a bowl of blood and a rod. At the bottom are five sacrificial offerings on tripods. The border is decorated with large *vajras*. To the goddess's right is the figure of a monk, and to her left a *stupa*. Oldenburg suggests that this may be Indraḍḍakīnī.
K.S.



12th-13th century

Tangka

On silk

88 × 58.5 cm

(with original mounting 109.5 × 62.8 cm)

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

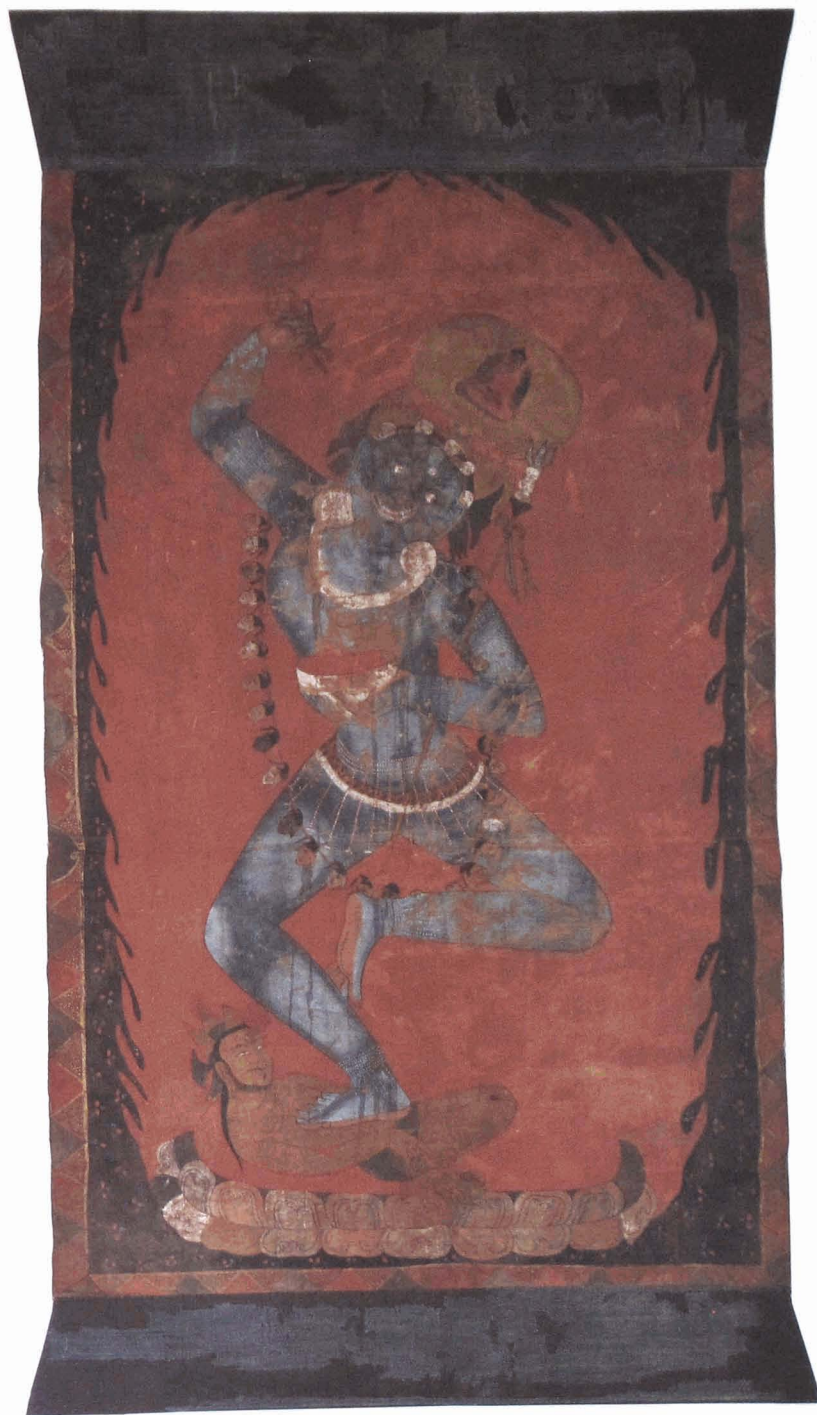
X-2396

Literature: Oldenburg, 1914, No. 82.

A blue dancing *dākinī* tramples with her right foot a prostrate yellow male figure, wearing a crown and lying on a multi-coloured lotus. In her right hand she holds a *karttykā* – a sacrificial knife, and in her left hand, against her breast, a skull-bowl, and a rod with a trident tip. In her bristling hair is an image of the Buddha. She is surrounded by red flames against a blue background with a floral design. The edging is decorated with a serrate pattern. The blue torso is modelled in the Indian manner by applying patches of darker blue colour. In style this particular *tangka* differs considerably from the bulk of the Tibetan style works in the Khara Khoto collection; possibly it is closer to the artistic tradition of Western Tibet.

Oldenburg suggests that the goddess may be Buddhaḍākinī, but no known *sādhana* of Buddhaḍākinī coincides with this *tangka*. K.S.







Late 12th-14th century
On paper (papier mâché)
Each part ca. 13.5 × 11 cm
The State Hermitage Museum,
St. Petersburg
X-2472-6 (5 numbers)

The ritual crown (*mukut*) consists of five panels, which were sewn together with strong thread. The panels are of laminated paper, several layers of paste-soaked paper having been bonded together to make a sort of papier-mâché. During restoration the layers were separated, each being cleaned, individually restored, and now kept separately. The lower layers of paper all bore writing – fragments of Tangut, Chinese and, in rare instances, Tibetan texts. In other words, we have a good

example here of the usual practice in China and Central Asia of recycling paper. Paper was, after all, an expensive commodity; works from Khara Khoto amply demonstrate how carefully it was used. Four parts of the crown are undoubtedly parts of an original whole. Each of them bears the image of a dancing *ḍākinī*. The *ḍākinīs* are all one-headed and four-armed, with horseshoe nimbuses, and ornamented with round gold earrings, necklaces, cords, bracelets and fluttering ribbons. They are shown against a blue background. The one on the extreme left has her main right hand clenched, and her left, palm outwards, against her breast. Her other two hands hold a bell and a *vajra*. The second holds a *damaru* and skull-bowl in her main hands, while her other hands are raised in the air. The third is holding a flute in her main

hands and a bell and *vajra* in the others. The fourth has a drum and a bowl of blood in her main hands, a lotus flower and a staff in the others. Their bodies are coloured, respectively, blue, red, yellow and white. The fifth panel may originally have belonged to another crown, and have been added to the present one. It depicts a white *ḍākinī* against a green background; she is holding a drum and a bowl in her main hands, and a plate (or musical instrument) and a staff in the others. There are several such crowns in the Khara Khoto collection, some of paper, some of silk, some of wood, and varying widely in artistic manner. They bear images of five Buddhas, the seven jewels of a *cakravartin*, the Eight Auspicious Objects, or *ḍākinīs*. All were used for ritual purposes.
K.S.

Late 12th - early 13th century

Scroll fragment

On paper

112.5 × 53 cm

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2398

Literature: Oldenburg S.F., 1914.

Lubo-Lesnichenko and Shafranovskaya, 1968.

This *preta* sits naked on a rug with staring eyes and bristling hair. He has a blue moustache, a beard, and a pendulous pot-belly, beneath which is a white garment. The bones and muscles on his arms, legs and chest are sharply defined. In his right hand he is holding a spoon of rice, in his left a bowl of rice.

A *preta* is a being suffering punishment for his sins in previous incarnations. He represents the Path of the *Pretas*, or the hungry demons, one of the six paths to rebirth to which a dead man might aspire, depending on his deeds in real life. They are the paths of Higher Beings, *Apsarās*, Mankind, Animals, *Pretas* and Hell.

These paths are clearly shown in the illustrations to the apocryphal tenth-century *Ten Kings sūtra*, discovered at Dunhuang.¹ The Khara Khoto collection includes an engraving of worlds with an accompanying Tangut text, which explains the nature of the six paths to rebirth ([X-2538], not included in this exhibition). It equates the Path of *Pretas* with the Path of Animals. The painting displayed depicts the *preta* as a being perpetually racked by hunger, his eyes ablaze with hunger and thirst; his wide-open mouth and swollen belly give further indication of his suffering. Though he holds a bowl of rice and a spoon, he cannot eat – for he has no gullet. Such is his punishment for greed. M.R.

¹See: Whitfield, 1982-1985, vol. 2, pl. 63,2 and 63,3.



**Amitābha Appearing
before Worshippers**

12th century

Scroll

On silk

125 × 64 cm

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2416

Literature: Krechetova, 1980, pp. 36-39.

The Buddha Amitābha is standing on two lotuses and facing three-quarters to his right, his hands in *vitarkamudrā*. In his hair is the disc of the sun. His outer garment is a pauper's cloak with a golden plant design, and a cord and fastening on the left shoulder. The folds of a second cloak, decorated with a gold dragon, phoenix, clouds and blazing jewels, hang over his arm and down his side. His lower garment has a peony-flower border. A cloud-like emanation from the Buddha's head fall upon the figures of the donors.

The donors are a man in a long gown with a *tufa* hairstyle and holding a censer, and a woman, also in a long gown, with her hair in a topknot decorated with jewels, and her hands together in prayer.

We may assume that the dragon and the phoenix, the peony-flower border on the Buddha's garment, which in China were symbols of marriage and high social station, offer sufficient keys to the content of the donors' prayer.

M.R.





**Greeting the Soul
of the Righteous Man
on the Way to the Pure
Land of Amitābha**

12th century

Scroll

On silk

113 × 61.5 cm

(with original mounting 119 × 61.5 cm)

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2415

The Buddha Amitābha is depicted standing on two lotuses, his hands in *vitarkamudrā*, and with a fiery nimbus. A 'pauper's' cloak is thrown across his shoulders, leaving his chest bare. The exact nature of his other garments is difficult to determine, due to the complexity of the folds and their varied coloration.

To the left of the central figure, the two *bodhisattvas* Mahāsthāmaprāpta and Avalokiteśvara, the former full face, the latter in profile, are also depicted standing on lotuses and holding in their hands a lotus throne to receive the soul of the righteous man. The *bodhisattvas* are wearing crowns of intricate design: Mahāsthāmaprāpta's bears a vessel, Avalokiteśvara's – a miniature Buddha Amitābha. As with the central figure, the exact nature of their garments is difficult to determine, due to the richness of their folding and ornamentation. To the left of the scroll, in front of the *bodhisattvas*, is a cloud bearing the figure of a baby, around whose body is wound a trailing ribbon. The baby symbolises the moment of rebirth of the Righteous Man.

M.R.





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**Greeting the Soul
of the Righteous Man
on the Way to the Pure
Land of Amitābha**

12th century
Scroll
On cotton
142.5 × 94 cm
(with original mounting 196.5 × 105.5 cm)
The State Hermitage Museum,
St. Petersburg
X-2410

Literature: Kozlov, 1923.

Euchi, Matsumoto, 1937, vol. 1, fig. 9.

Zhivopis' srednevekovogo Vostoka

[Medieval Oriental Painting], 1967, pl. 8.

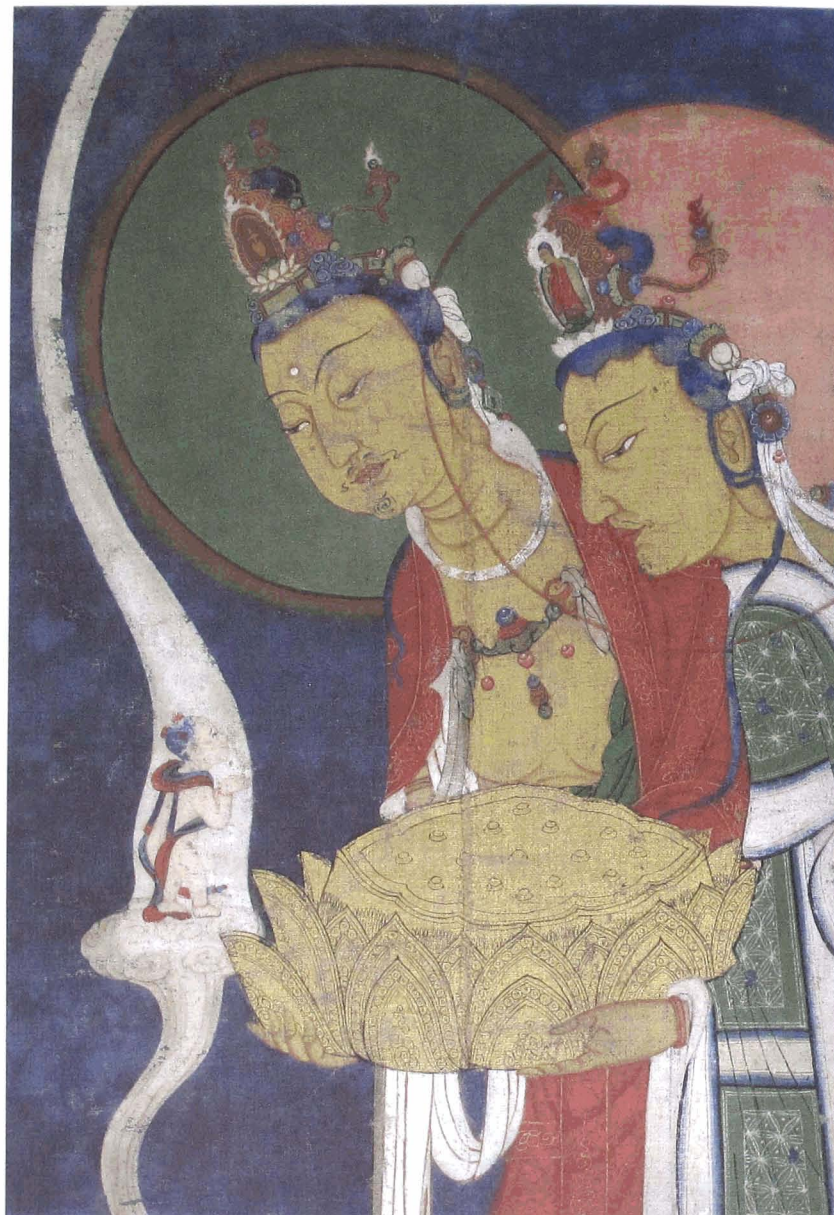
*Scythian, Persian and Central Asian Art
from the Hermitage Collection*, 1969,

pl. 168.

Samosyuk, 1989, pp. 178-184.

The Buddha Amitābha and the *bodhisattvas* Mahāsthāmaprāpta and Avalokiteśvara are depicted holding a lotus throne to receive the Soul of the Righteous Man at the moment of his rebirth. In the top left corner the seated figure is that of the same Righteous Man before his death. The Buddha's hands are in *vitarkamudrā*. The artist has clearly not fully understood how the Buddha should be dressed. The pauper's cloak which the Buddha normally wears here looks more like a baby's vest, with the chest covered but the back left bare. There is obviously also something odd about the feet of both *bodhisattvas*: Mahāsthāmaprāpta's left foot has replaced the right foot of Avalokiteśvara. The Righteous Man in the bottom left corner is a monk with a shaven head, his hands together in prayer, and seated on a rug beneath a tree.

MR





**Greeting the Soul
of the Righteous Man
on the Way to the Pure
Land of Amitābha**

Late 12th century

Scroll

On linen

84.8 × 63.8 cm

(with original mounting 99 × 63.8 cm)

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2411

Literature: Zuber, 1940, pl. 2.

Samosyuk, 1989, pp. 178-184.

The Buddha Amitābha, standing on two lotuses, is escorted by the two *bodhisattvas*, Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, also standing on lotuses; they are holding a lotus throne to receive the Soul of the Righteous Man in the Pure Land of Amitābha.

The Buddha's hands are in *vitarkamudrā*.

In Mahāsthāmaprāpta's crown is a vessel, in Avalokiteśvara's – an image of the Buddha Amitābha.

The *bodhisattvas*' dress is not easy to understand. Mahāsthāmaprāpta's right shoulder is covered by a scarf with a lining, and the lower part of his body is wrapped in what appears to be a cloak, made up of large patches. Below it can be seen an undergarment and the end of a decorated ribbon. Avalokiteśvara's dress is even more of a mystery: the upper part of his body is covered by scarves of various colours, the ends of which fall away to both sides, exposing his back and arm.

His *paridhāna* and skirt are decorated with jewels.

The dead man is shown in two forms.

We see him at the moment of rebirth as a naked, shaven-headed child, wearing a child's vest and soft white shoes, his body wrapped in ribbon, against the background of an emanation from the head of the Buddha. In the lower left corner we see him with long straight hair, parted in the middle and falling to his shoulders. Shorter locks of hair cover his temples. He is in a long gown, trimmed on the collar

and cuffs, where an undergarment can also be seen.

He has a large face, with a long moustache and a large nose. He is standing, with his hands together in prayer, on a patch of dry ground which occupies the whole corner of the painting. The scene is set against a flat, bright red background. In the top left-hand corner there is a Chinese pavilion on a cloud, and flying musical instruments. The feet of the Buddha and the *bodhisattvas* are set among rolling clouds.

M.R.





**Greeting the Soul
of the Righteous Woman
on the Way to the Pure
Land of Amitābha**

13th century

Scroll

On linen

45 × 31 cm

(with original mounting 75 × 37 cm)

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2412

Literature: Zuber, 1940, pl. 111.

The Buddha Amitābha with his hands in *vitarkamudrā* and the two *bodhisattvas* Mahāsthāmaprāpta and Avalokiteśvara (Guanyin) are depicted all standing on lotuses and holding in their hands a lotus throne to receive the Soul of the Righteous Woman.

The dead woman is shown twice: in the bottom left corner she is standing in a long gown, trimmed at the neck, and with luxuriant hair tied in a large bun; above we see her on a cloud, reborn as a naked child, tied round with ribbon. The cloud forms a link between the living person and the reborn child.

In the top left corner are musical instruments. Between the Buddha and the *bodhisattvas* is a tree.

M.R.





**The Pure Land
of Amitābha and Bhaiṣajyaguru
with Seven Companions**

12th - early 14th century

Scroll

On cotton

113 × 78 cm

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2419

The Buddha Amitābha is seated in *vīrāsana*, with his hands in *dhyaṇamudrā* on a single long-stemmed lotus rising from a pool. Beneath him to his right and left are two further long-stemmed lotuses on which are seated the *bodhisattvas* Avalokiteśvara (Guanyin) and Mahāsthāmaprāpta. Above the rainbow-striped *mandorla* are ten scenes depicting the Buddha Amitābha greeting the Soul of the Righteous Man on the way to the Pure Land. Surrounding the large nimbus of Amitābha are eight seated Healing Buddhas.

Avalokiteśvara is seated on a lotus in *vīrāsana*, his right hand in *vitarkamudrā* and his left in *dhyaṇamudrā*. He is wearing a small crown with a figure of the Buddha Amitābha in its centre.

Mahāsthāmaprāpta is seated on a lotus in *vīrāsana*, his right hand in *abhayamudrā* and his left in *vitarkamudrā*.

In the lower part of the scroll the space between the lotuses and around the pool is filled with clouds and a floral pattern brocade. Six birds – two peacocks, two parrots and two storks – stand round the pool, which has a brick surround; on each brick is the *triratna* 'three jewel' symbol at its centre; and on the pool's surface float lotuses with leaves, on which sit the reborn Righteous Men.

In the centre of the scroll, to each side of the lotus stem supporting the Buddha Amitābha, is a reborn Righteous Man. They are wearing cloaks, which leave their right shoulders bare, and hats resembling a *bodhisattva*'s crown. Their hands are together in prayer. To their right and left are two more Righteous Men, also seated







on lotuses. They are wearing patchwork 'pauper's cloaks', which also leave their shoulders bare. They have shaven heads and their hands together in prayer. In the foreground, also on both sides of the central lotus stem, are two righteous men, kneeling on lotuses, with their hands together in prayer, shaven-headed and wearing only loincloths. There are two further figures in precisely the same dress and posture.

In the two bottom corners are the figures of donors: on the left a haloed monk, seated on a rug, wearing a patchwork 'pauper's cloak' trimmed at the edges; and on the right, a grey-haired, shaven-headed, haloed monk, also seated on a rug and wearing a patchwork cloak.

He is holding a rosary.

In the upper part of the scroll are eight seated figures: a Healing Buddha and his seven companions. Beneath him to right and left are musical instruments. All eight are painted in the Tibetan style. The Buddhas are in *padmāsana*; their *mudrās* are, reading upwards from left to right – *bhūmisparśa*, *vitarka*, ?, *dhyāna*, ?, *dharmacakra*, and *abhaya*.

The figures of the reborn are of particular interest because this may well be the only surviving picture of Righteous Men, classified according to the nine grades of salvation, which are given visual expression in the varying positions of the fingers of the Buddha Amitābha and the *bodhisattvas* in *vitarkamudrā* (the gestures of the nine classes of Amitābha).¹

M.R.

¹For further detail see: Amitāyussūtra, Sukhāvṛtyūhasūtra, Sūtra of the Bhikṣu Nāgasena.



The Pure Land of Amitābha

Early 13th century

Tangka

On cotton

76 × 43 cm

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2349

Literature: Oldenburg, 1914,

No. 31, fig. 17.

Zuber S.M., 1940.

The composition is identical to that of catalog number 43, except that there are no Healing Buddhas.

The Buddha is in *padmāsana*, his hands in *dhyānamudrā*. His throne is decorated with two birds with luxuriant, highly stylised tails and ribbons, tied in bows. On the *mandorla* are tiny figures of the Buddha Amitābha seated on a lotus.

In the lower part of the *tangka* is a pool with a bricked surround. On lotuses rising from the pool are the souls of the reborn Righteous Men. Three of them are shown as boys, kneeling, with their hair tied in bunches with ribbons; three others sit on lotuses with straight-combed hair. They are all naked, with their hands together in *añjalimudrā*.

Around the pool are birds and *garuḍas*, and in the upper left-hand corner are instruments.

M.R.





Early 13th century

Tangka

On silk

62 × 46 cm

(with original mounting 81.5 × 51.5 cm)

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2345

The overall iconography here is identical to that of catalog number 43 and 44.

The Buddha is in *padmāsana*, his hands in *dhyānamudrā*. He is seated on a lotus throne, atop a lotus stem rising from a pool. From this central stem spring two lateral stems, which bear the lotus thrones of the escorting *bodhisattvas*.

In the space between the two *bodhisattvas* and to each side of the central stem are stylised lotus flowers and leaves on long slender stalks. The Buddha, with an oval

nimbus, is shown against a triple *mandorla*.

The inner *mandorla* is of the same colour as the nimbus and decorated with jewels; the central one is rainbow-patterned; the outer one contains decorative features of the throne – its top, slats and beribboned *cintāmaṇis*, are all executed, like the *tangka* as a whole, in two dimensions.

The *bodhisattvas*, who have their own oval nimbuses and *mandorlas*, are in non-canonical postures; their hands are in *vitarkamudrā*. Their crowns and decorations are reminiscent of the Nepalese style.

The upper corners of the painting are decorated with acanthus leaves, and the background has a fine floral design.

The *tangka*'s headpiece is made of a polka-dot fabric.

M.R.



Guanyin, Moon in Water

12th century

Scroll

On silk

101.5 × 59.5 cm

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X.2439

Literature: Krechetova, 1980.

Samosyuk, 1989, pp. 178-184.

Bodhisattva Guanyin is depicted here in the form Pure Moon, Reflected in Water, but the iconography is confused, containing elements also of the 'White-robed' Guanyin (the white shawl thrown over his dress, and the 'Willow branch' Guanyin (a vase on the table contains a willow branch to ward off evil).

He is in *lalitāsana*.

The *bodhisattva* Guanyin is painted in traditional pose, in a rocky grotto,

bordered by bamboo canes. In the bottom left corner is the figure of a dead Tangut in a green cloak decorated with a golden medallion motif, wearing an embroidered hat, and with a censer in his hands. Behind the dead man stands a serving boy. At the top right the dead man is shown again, now reborn as a boy, reaching out his hands in prayer to the deity. This cloud-borne scene is contrasted with the lower right part of the scroll, where on a spit of land, diagonally opposite the deity and separated by a thin strip of sky, dance four Tangut, dressed in green, with *tufa* hairstyles, and playing musical instruments. This 'concert', incidentally, is unique. To their right are two horses, and behind the horses – a wooden staff with a large banner. In the very corner is an open grave. The *tufa* hairstyle was introduced in Xi Xia by the emperor Yuan-hao in 1033. It was

one of a series of edicts issued with the aim of strengthening the infant state's sense of national identity.'

M.R.

¹See also essays in this catalogue by K. Samosyuk.









**Guanyin, Moon
in Water**

Late 12th-13th century

Scroll

On cotton

68 × 48.8 cm

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2438

The iconography is identical to that of catalog numbers 46 and 48.

The *bodhisattva* Guanyin is seated on a broad flat rock in *lalitāsana*. To his right are stylised rock formations which take the form of a grotto. The edges of this grotto, the projecting spurs of the rocky platform, the crown and robe of the *bodhisattva* are all outlined in gold. On a stone table stands a golden vessel holding a willow branch. In the bottom right corner, on a sharp rocky outcrop jutting out into the sea, are the figures of two worshippers. One is in the typical dress of a Chinese official – a gown, a belt and a hat with long side flaps, *pu tou*. His hands are together in prayer. The other is naked to the waist, except for a long scarf thrown over one shoulder. He is holding a vase of flowering peonies. His face has strange, monkey-like features.¹ The background is mock-fabric with a fine floral design.

Heavy lines and curves are used to create a stylised image of foam-crested waves. *M.R.*

¹See also essays in this catalogue by K. Samosyuk.





**Guanyin, Moon
in Water**

Early 13th century

Tangka

On fabric

34.5 × 27 cm

(with original mounting 56 × 34 cm)

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2437

This shares the same iconography as catalogue numbers 46 and 47, but not their diagonal composition. The *bodhisattva* is depicted seated in *lalitāsana* on a large rock. To his right are the slender trunks of trees with tiny leaves, somewhat reminiscent of bamboo. To his left are flowering shrubs. Other small flowering plants surround the rock on which the *bodhisattva* is seated. His crown is painted rather indistinctly, though it is possible to make out an ornamental band and ribbons. A cape is thrown over his shoulders and he has a scarf tied across his chest. The lower part of his body is concealed by a skirt, falling in heavy folds to the rock on which he sits.

M.R.



12th century

Scroll

On silk

97.5 × 59 cm

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2435

Literature: The Chinese Exhibition, 1935,
pl. 89.

The *bodhisattva* is depicted seated in *mahārājalīlāsana* on a lotus, atop a tall throne, surrounded by a double nimbus, with three attendants and two donors. His crown bears an image of the Buddha Amitābha.

He is dressed in a cloak, shawl and *paridhāna*, with a pendant and bracelets.

His left arm is resting upon his throne, while the right is holding a book.

The attendant figures are; to his right a standing monk with shaven head and a nimbus; below the monk, in the bottom left corner, a young man or boy standing atop a lotus throne.

The young man's head is shaven, but with tufts of hair on each temple, tied with ribbon. He wears bracelets on his arms, and his hands are together in prayer.

To the *bodhisattva*'s left is an official in a tall hat; his haloed hand is in a gesture of prayer.

Below on the right, at the foot of the throne, are two women-donors, both dressed in long gowns wrapped over diagonally at the front, with slit sides.

Both have their hair gathered in tall buns on top of their heads, tied by vertical and horizontal braids.

The donor on the right is holding a dish with a large peony blossom; the one on the left has her hands together in prayer.

In front of each is a vertical board standing on a lotus and covered by a lotus leaf.

The older woman's tablet is inscribed with

the characters *bai shi tao* (the peachwood board of the Bai family).¹

On the younger woman's is written: *xin fu gao shi fan*[?] *xian* (the bride from the Gao family is burning incense).

M.R.

¹In China, boards of peachwood were held to offer protection from evil spirits.





12th century

Scroll

On silk

96 × 60 cm

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2447

12th century

Scroll

On silk

103.7 × 57.5 cm

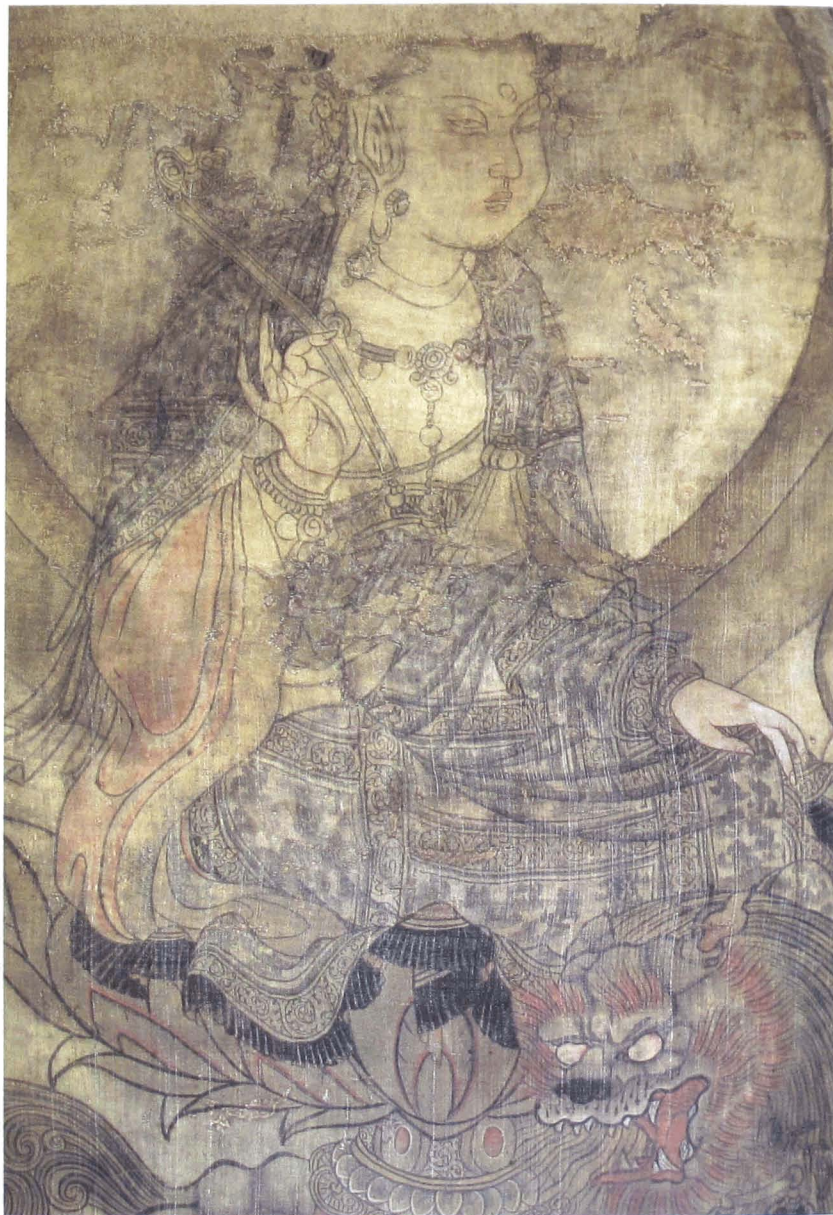
The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2444

The cults of these two *bodhisattvas* find expression in the Khara Khoto collection in differing iconographic forms: as paired scrolls from a triptych which has lost its central panel depicting the Buddha, individually, and as the Mañjuśrī of esoteric Buddhism. These three iconographies belong, respectively, to three traditions: the Chinese, the Chinese-influenced local tradition; and the Tibetan-influenced local tradition.

These two *bodhisattvas* first became popular in China from the late 8th century, when the third translation was made of the Huayan *sūtra* (*Avatamsakasūtra*), and the cult gathered further strength in the tenth to thirteenth centuries. Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra, together with the Buddha Vairocana, are known as the Three Princes, or Three Saints, from the Huayan *sūtra*. The two *bodhisattvas* form a pair, representing wisdom and knowledge, and appear to left and right of the figure of Śākyamuni (or, more rarely, Vairocana). Mañjuśrī is the main patron of the Huayan school, and in the doctrine of Mahāyāna is cast as the chief disciple of the Buddha Śākyamuni. He is the embodiment of *zhi* or *prajñā* (wisdom). The main centre of his cult in China was a monastery in the mountains of Wutaishan, with which the







50. *Mañjuśrī*.

51. *Samantabhadra.*



Tangut had close connections, and to which they made many pilgrimages. Samantabhadra is the main patron deity of the adepts of the Lotus *sūtra*; the importance of his cult is underlined by the fact that the final chapter of the *Avataṃsakasūtra* is devoted to him. The most important centre of his cult in China was the mountain Emeishan in Sichuan. He is the spiritual son of the Buddha Vairocana. Worshippers prayed to Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra for compassion and intercession. In the Lotus *sūtra*, Samantabhadra became the protecting deity of female saints. These scrolls, (50) and (51) – of Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra respectively, are the left and right sides of a triptych. There are many examples of such triptychs at Dunhuang, and among ninth to tenth century paintings from the monasteries of Turfan in the Hermitage collection. An example closer in period to the Khara Khoto scrolls is the twelfth century Samantabhadra in the Cleveland Museum. In all these works both *bodhisattvas* are accompanied by a magnificent retinue. The two scrolls are close in spirit to painting of the Song dynasty. This rather vague association is prompted by both iconographic and stylistic features. *Āśanas*, *mudrās*, the form of crown, and attributes all tend to dissociate them from the Tang tradition. As researchers have pointed out, the lotus which Samantabhadra holds in his hand, with the *sūtra* resting on it, is a detail which appeared in Chinese works no earlier than the 11th century. Mañjuśrī's *rui* is another specifically Chinese attribute of similar date. The lion and the elephant are somehow more feeble than their Tang counterparts, and the drivers no longer have southern Indian features. In aspects of technique, they too are closer to the art of the Song: for instance in the

importance of line, the elegance of the drawing, and the use of line in the depiction of folds in fabrics. It is line which shapes the face, the delicate outline of the chin, and which models the neck and chest. Garments are defined in close detail, with long hanging folds. For all their similarities, there are still problems in attributing this pair of paintings to the hand of a single artist. In some fine detail – for instance, the lobes of the ears, the bracelets on the *bodhisattvas*' arms, the folds of the scarves, the decoration of their robes, and the curl of the lotus petals – the two scrolls do seem to betray different hands.

50. Mañjuśrī

Mañjuśrī is depicted seated on a lotus throne atop a lion. In his right hand he is holding a *rui*, instead of the more usual lotus flower or lotus flower with a book resting on it. This detail alone points clearly to the sinicisation of Indian Buddhist iconography. To his right is a bearded figure, wearing the hat of a functionary and with a *shivang* in his hand; he is the Indian Yamāntaka, Lord of the Underworld. To his left is Shancai tungzi, the constant companion and disciple of Mañjuśrī, the Indian Sudhanakumāra, mentioned in the Huayan *sūtra*.

The lion has a green mane, and its driver is of Central Asian appearance. His pose has analogies in paintings at Dunhuang. Mañjuśrī, like Samantabhadra, is presented three-quarter face. Mañjuśrī's lion and Samantabhadra's elephant are moving towards each other – further evidence that the two paintings are fragments of a single triptych.

51. Samantabhadra

The *bodhisattva* is seated on a lotus throne atop an elephant with six tusks – as in Dunhuang paintings of the same subject. In his right hand he is holding a lotus with

three shoots, upon which lies a book – an attribute traditionally shared with Mañjuśrī; it was described as early as the eleventh century in China, and is connected with the emergence of esoteric Buddhism. His left hand is in *varamudrā*. To his right stands a figure dressed like a Chinese nobleman and holding a censer, while to his left is a youth in a costume combining details of the raiment of a *bodhisattva* with those of ordinary apparel. The driver is of Central Asian appearance. K.S.



13th century

Scroll

On silk

92 × 59.8 cm

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2445

The *bodhisattva* is depicted in *bhadrāsana*. His right hand is in *tarjanimudrā*; in his left hand he is holding a *sūtra* and a blazing jewel; his headdress is adorned with five blazing jewels, a traditional attribute of Samantabhadra. His throne sits atop a five-tusked elephant, and on its side carries attributes in the form of brushes in a holder, a vessel and a book, and gifts in the form of fruit. The *bodhisattva's* retinue consists of six figures and a youth with his hands together in prayer (*añjalimudrā*), and dressed in Central Asian style. The figures in the retinue are two *bodhisattvas*, two protectors, a monk with a shoulder sash across his left shoulder, and an old man with a long beard and eyebrows, wearing a functionary's hat (*shī wang*). Above the *bodhisattva* are two clouds each holding five praying figures.

The scroll appears to have been cropped down each side, where the edge of the dress of further figures can be made out. In both iconography and style, the work combines Chinese, Central Asian and Tibetan features.

The Tibetan influence is most obvious in the style – the symmetrical composition, the static full-face posture of the central figure, and the slightly flattened shape of the *mandorla*.

The iconography of the protectors and the two *bodhisattvas* is Chinese, while the dark-red flowery background is typically Central Asian.

We can date this work to the thirteenth century, but only tentatively. The shoulder-length locks of hair, the treatment of the moustache, and the beard in the form

of a spiral curl are similar to the *Mahasthāmaprāpta* (Cat. No. 53). As well as the fascinating blend of stylistic and iconographic features, this Samantabhadra also contains a curious anthropological mix: the central figure has Mongol features, the *bodhisattvas* look Chinese, while the young man and the heavy-bearded figure with deep set eyes and a shoulder sash both look almost European. This all remains as much a mystery as the way the elephant seems weighed down by the throne, and the extreme perspectival foreshortening of the throne itself.

K.S.





13th century

Scroll

On silk

125 × 62.5 cm

(with original mounting 155.5 × 62.5 cm)

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2441

The golden *bodhisattva* Mahāsthāmaprāpta (Chinese: *Dashizhi*) is seated in *vīrasana* or *bodhi* on a blue lotus throne, with the outer layer of lotus petals raised. The right hand is in *vitarkamudrā* in its Mahāśrī variation, where the thumb touches the fourth finger. The left arm is held horizontally across the chest. His clothing is lilac-coloured, with a red and green outer cloak. On his head is a jewelled crown, with, at its centre, a vessel which is a characteristic attribute of Mahāsthāmaprāpta. In the Khara Khoto compositions depicting *Greeting the Soul...* (Cat. Nos. 39-42) he is also depicted with this vessel in his head-dress. The lazurite-blue locks of his hair, tightly twisted, rise above his crown and tumble over his back and shoulders, falling to each side of his elongated ear lobes. His figure is bedecked with jewels, including a necklace and bracelets.

He has a concentrated expression on his face, with lowered eyelids. The features are drawn with great elegance, the moustache and beard beautifully rendered, and the folds of the chin and the neck delicately marked.

The figure as a whole is slightly elongated, with elegant slender fingers and long pointed nails. The legs, with their bracelet ornaments, are equally gracefully executed. The edging of the dress is ornamented, the folds having a purely decorative role. Around the *bodhisattva's* head is a blue nimbus with red tongues of flame. The *mandorla* is white. Above the nimbus hangs a canopy of flowers, painted in the Southern Song style. Below are clouds

and waves, in the midst of which is set the lotus throne.

Mahāsthāmaprāpta is usually twinned with Avalokiteśvara in scenes of the Amitābha Pure Land. Dashizhi never achieved the popularity of Guanyin, and is rarely depicted by himself rather than as part of a retinue. He is allotted the same salvatory role as Avalokiteśvara and is closely connected with the Amitābha cult – one of the most popular in both China and the Tangut Empire.

Oldenburg took the view that, although the attributes of this *bodhisattva* are those of Mahāsthāmaprāpta, the *mudrā* is that of Maitreya. On this basis he identified him as such.

The outstanding stylistic feature of the work is its 'cold' palette, built on an interplay of pink, lilac, green and blue – a colour scheme typical of the Southern Song. Interestingly, a composition of Guanyin' similar in palette and in the delicate curl of the folds at the edge of the dress, is dated to the Mongol Yuan dynasty. It may be, therefore, that our scroll also is of the thirteenth century.

¹Reproduced in the album *Hin Seynu*, 1955, pl. 18.





Pisha Men, Guardian of the North
(*Vaiśravaṇa*)

12th century

Scroll

On silk

61.5 × 55 cm

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2461

In the centre of the scroll, set against a broad strip of sky, is Pisha men, Guardian of the North, riding a galloping horse.¹ He is in armour, with a crown and nimbus. Surrounding him are nine figures running at full tilt.

Three of them, carrying a pagoda, a banner and a trident, are *yakṣas* and sons of Pisha men. Two *yakṣas* with maces and wearing *pu tou* – Chinese official's hats – are connected with a female erotic cult, and are also protectors of the dead. The *yakṣa* with a vessel and lightning may be connected with 'abundance'. The man in a *pu tou* and a long gown, carrying a scroll, and the *yakṣa* dragging a half-naked man by the hair are connected with a cult of the dead; the first is an official who records the deeds of believers, the other personifies punishment of the impious. The ninth figure, between the *yakṣa* dragging a man by his hair, is Budong Ming Wang, a Tantric deity, who frightens off demons and evil spirits: his attributes, the seal and the cord, are connected with the trapping of devils.

The fine use of line, the subtle palette, the diagonal basis to the composition, and the rural scene all testify to the high professional skills of the painter, and allow us to date the work to the Southern Song period.

The group of attendant figures in this scroll has no analogy in any surviving Chinese or Japanese works on the same theme.² The Khara Khoto paintings are, therefore, of great value as insights into the nature and meaning of the cult of this particular deity.

M.R.



¹An iconographic form of Vaiśravaṇa, riding a horse and accompanied by *yakṣas*. See: Soodhull and Hodons 1937, p. 306.

²There is one analogous work in terms of subject, composition and attendant figures in the Khara Khoto collection (X-2460, not in this exhibition).



13th-14 th century

Tangka

On white and blue checkered linen

95.5 × 64 cm

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2382

Literature: Oldenburg, 1914,

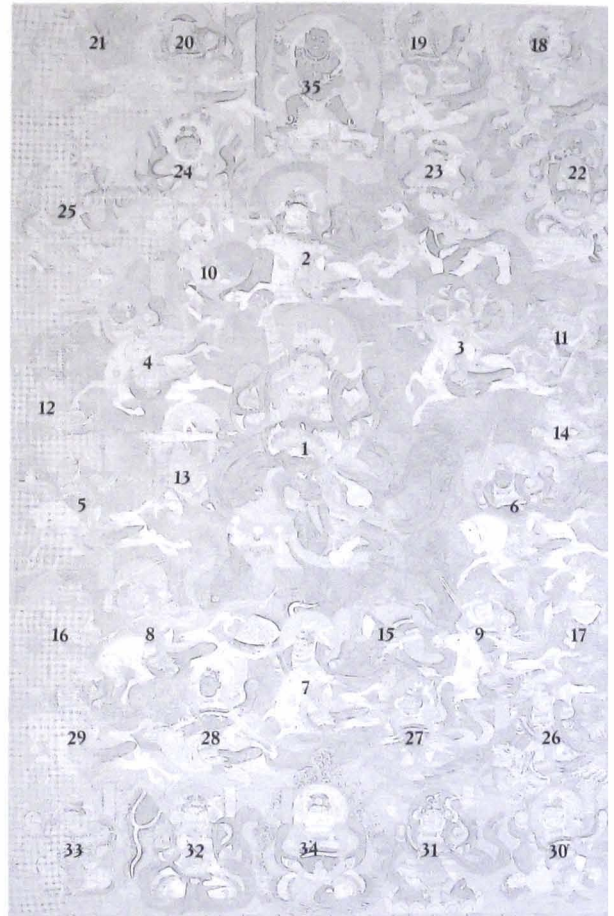
No. 68, pp. 55-56.

Béguin *et al.*, 1977.

At the centre of the *tangka* is Kubera (1) astride a lion and dressed – according to an iconographic tradition which applies equally to Vaiśravaṇa – in warrior's armour and wearing a crown. He is carrying his traditional attributes: in his right hand a banner, in his left – a mongoose spouting gems.¹ He is surrounded by eight riders, representing the eight corners of the world (forms of Vaiśravaṇa), who are themselves surrounded by eight *yakṣas* bearing attributes of wealth (forms of Kubera). Immediately above the central Kubera is a rider with a mongoose and blazing jewel on a tray, representing the North (2).

Clockwise to the right is a warrior wearing a boar's mask, carrying in his left hand a mongoose, and in his right a pavilion on a tray. He is the Northwest (3). The warrior with a spear and a mongoose (4) is the Northeast, while the warrior with a mongoose and a golden vessel (5) is the East. The West (6) carries a sword and mongoose; the South (7) – a mongoose and *tai-ji* on a dish.² Correspondingly, the Southeast (8) is a warrior with the head of a cat, carrying a mongoose in his left hand and a sabre in his right; the Southwest (9) has a mongoose and a sword in his right hand.

The eight riders are matched by eight *yakṣas*, who traditionally enjoy the patronage of Kubera. The *yakṣas* here, however, differ in some respects from those described in literature. The dwarfs carrying





jewels (12, 13, 16) are the traditional guardians of Kubera's treasures which lie in the earth; but the man in loose clothing and a Chinese *pu tou* hat (15), and the man with a hare's mask and an axe at his back (17) are connected with the cult of the dead which emerged in China as early as the tenth century. The man in the *pu tou*, which was normally worn by Chinese officials, is the recorder of the good and bad deeds of the dead; the hare was always associated in China with the moon and with death, while an axe in Buddhist iconography symbolises the destruction of evil forces threatening the law. Garuda (11) guards the Buddha against his mortal enemies the *nāgas*; Gandapo with a halberd in his right hand, symbolises the Wheel of the Law, the movement of the sun and time (14). Both these figures belong to a group of eight lower-order deities, known as *ba bu zhong*. It is interesting that the painter chose these two deities, both connected with the passage of time, to act as protectors of the Great Law of the Buddha. Unfortunately, it is impossible to discern what the figure of the warrior (10) is holding, and consequently, to interpret his meaning.

At the top of the *tangka* are eight figures, who have thus far defied all efforts to accommodate them to a single plan. The central is the repetition of the figure of Kubera in (19) and (23), with identical iconography, except that in (19) the lion is couchant, and in (23) stant; and another almost perfectly replicated pair – (22) and (25). The remaining figures in the upper two rows have several remarkable features.

Figure (18) is a rider on a mythical beast – a *makara*, which symbolises the Indian water god Varuṇa, is one of the nine treasures of Kubera and his usual mount. The rider, holding in his right hand a serpent, and his left a mongoose, represents the West. The

Kubera in (19) may symbolise the North. The monkey riding a wolf is particularly interesting, for his right hand he has a lotus flower (which, if he is to be associated with Kubera, is identifiable as a source of wealth) and in his left a mongoose, a symbol of wealth itself. The wolf, like the jackal, is a harbinger of evil, and usually accompanies the evil *apsarās* from the group of the eight lowest deities in the Buddhist hierarchy. A working hypothesis is that this is an image of one of the deities connected with the theory of retribution: the lotus symbolises Amitābha's Pure Land the wolf – punishment for sins, while the monkey, according to Indian mythology, is the herald and protector of the Buddhist faith. If that be so, then this image as a whole, like Yama, represents the South. Finally, the last in the row (21), the rider on a horse, defies identification, if only because his main attribute, held in his right hand, is lost. His position suggests that he may represent the East.

Taking the next row from right to left, the armoured warrior with skulls in his crown, holding a lotus flower (a symbol of Amitābha's Pure Land) in his left hand, a severed head in his right hand, and trampling a headless body, is Yama; his attributes symbolise retribution for sins, and justice. He, we know for certain, represents the South. Figure (23) is Kubera mounted on a lion. Figure (24) is a warrior with a vessel in his right hand, seated on a large gold vessel. In Indian mythology a vessel holding water (a source of life), and a *yakṣa*, who controls rainfall, symbolise prosperity. Here, in all probability, we have Varuṇa, lord of the Waters, Lord of the Water-vessel. Figure (25) is a warrior with a garland of skulls, trampling a prostrate human body, and surrounded by tongues of flame. The iconographic detail suggests that this is Bu dong, the deity who personifies the Buddha's wrath against all enemies of the Great Law.

The lower part of the *tangka* also has two rows of figures. On the right of the second row from the bottom (26) we have a warrior mounted on a tiger, holding a banner in his right hand, and in his left what appears to be a vessel. This is Kubera again, though having him mounted on a tiger was a rarity at this time. In Chinese mythology, the god of wealth is customarily depicted riding a tiger – the king of beasts, which struck terror into demons. The tiger, moreover, symbolises the West.

Immediately to the left is a rider on a goat (27), holding a triangle in his right hand and a mongoose in his left. The triangle represents fire, which purges the world of all impurity. Indian mythology connects the goat with Kubera. Moving to the left again, we have a rider mounted on a doe, holding a banner in his right hand and a mongoose in his left. Again the attributes are those of Kubera. The doe is associated in Indian mythology with Vāyu, the god of the air. On the far left of the second row from the bottom is a rider on a horse (29). He is holding the Wheel of the Law in his right hand and in his left a mongoose. The Wheel of the Law is an ancient Indian and Buddhist symbol of the earth, of time, of the movement of the sun. The group as a whole then is taken from Chinese mythology, and represents the elements of fire, wind, earth, and water – the latter in the form of the figure representing the West and mounted on a tiger. Reading from right to left, the bottom row begins with an erotic couple (30), consisting of a warrior in armour and a naked woman with her hair piled up high. This warrior, in Indian mythology, is Indra, who, in this position, embodies earthly abundance; the golden disc in his hand is in this case a symbol of the life force and of the act of birth. One place to the left of Indra is a warrior standing atop a lotus throne, holding a golden vessel in his right hand and a mongoose in his left (31). The



vase and lotus are rendered in a purely conventional form, and are associated with plant life, fertility and earthly abundance. The central figure in the bottom row is a warrior sitting atop the waves (34). He is haloed, with the towering waves serving as *mandorla*. Upon his hands rests a golden vessel. Everything – central position, posture, *mudrā*, and attributes – identifies him as the god of water, Varuṇa. Figure (32), the seated warrior with a banner in his right hand and a mongoose in his left, is Kubera. The last figure (33) sitting on a lotus surrounded by tongues of fire, holds a wheel of the law in his right hand and a mongoose in his left. Iconographic detail aligns him with the deities (27, 29, 30); all depict the purifying element of fire, and bear the golden disc which symbolises the life force and the earth.

In Chinese mythology there are five spirits corresponding to the five corners of the earth – North, South, East, West and Centre. The centre was personified in the form of a dragon, protector of all land. On this basis we may assume that the figure in the centre of the bottom row (34) is a dragon, controller of the waters, and the deity who bestows fertility upon the earth. The third deity, located in the top centre of the *tangka*, is Vighnāntaka, the remover of obstacles.

Unlike all the other deities in the Tangut, whose iconography is Chinese, his is Tibetan. If we take together the multiple allusions to Indian mythology, Chinese myth and legend, we can approach an overall meaning for the *tangka*, which relates to the achievement of wealth (that is the accumulation of worldly goods), the fertility of the soil, natural abundance, the punishment of the impious, the rewarding of the righteous, and the protection of all things against the machinations of the powers of evil. This compound purpose is expressed through

a complex combination of deities and symbols. There is another important feature: the grouping and disposition of the various deities links the *tangka* with both Indian and Chinese myths about the division of creation into three horizontal layers. Kubera, at the centre, is surrounded by sixteen deities who are all in motion, eight of them riding horses. Horses are animals of the sun, and represent motion itself. The centre of the *tangka* can then be seen as the celestial sphere, with Vaiśravaṇa, Lord of the Heavens, and the eight horsemen who represent the eight points of the compass.

The figure in the centre of the bottom row, the dragon god, in China personifies the watery element; this took the place of what in Indian myth was the 'underground' sphere. The earthly sphere occupies the two top rows, with at its centre the figure of Vighnāntaka, whose purpose is to remove all obstacles barring the path to earthly prosperity. It is worthy of note that in this sphere there are two deities (20 and 22) connected with the Buddhist theory of retribution and reward for one's earthly deeds, whose Chinese variant found expression in the apocryphal *sūtra*, *The Ten Kings*.
M.R.

¹In ancient Hindu mythology the mongoose, which in nature is renowned for killing snakes, devoured *nāgas*, the enemies of the Buddha. *Nāgas* are still considered to abduct (or protect) riches.

²*Tai-ji* is the 'great boundary', a circle divided into equal halves: *yang* – the bright, male principle, the sun; and *yin* – the dark, female principle, the moon. All living things are born of the interreaction of these two. *Tai-ji* is also the source of the five elements, from which all living things on earth emerge.



Early 13th century

Tangka

On cotton (?)

31 × 21.5 cm

(with original mounting 54 × 35 cm)

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2403

Literature: Oldenburg, 1914,

No. 89, pp. 68-69.

Kubera is depicted seated on a lion at the centre of a white circle. He is in armour, crowned, and carrying a parasol. The outer circle is divided into eight sectors, each containing a mounted horseman. The circles are contained within a square, in the corners of which are four *nāgas*. At the top of the *tangka* are five *dhyānibuddhas*, and in the bottom central section five bowls containing sacrificial gifts.

In the bottom corners two half-naked donors stand at prayer, with, next to each of them, what appears to be a palm.

At top and bottom the *tangka* is framed by large trapeziform endpieces of golden-coloured silk.

M.R.



11th century
Scroll
On silk
102 × 66 cm
The State Hermitage Museum,
St. Petersburg
X-2424

The central figure in the scroll is Tejaprabhā (Chinese: *Chifengguangfo*), Buddha of the Luxuriant Fiery Glow, as Nevsky translated the name (1960, vol. 1). He is red in colour; with his arms folded in his lap, his hands are in *samādhimudrā* and hold the Wheel of the Law. He is seated on a lotus, with a moon seat. Beneath his *uṣṇīṣa* is a red mark, denoting the great light of the sun and moon.

Around him are arranged eleven planets. Immediately below him to his left and right are the deities of Sun and Moon, dressed as emperor and empress, and holding tablets. Two phoenixes adorn the Moon's head-dress, while the Sun is wearing the ceremonial head-dress of an emperor or high official. Between them, at the bottom centre, stands the deity of the planet Saturn in the guise of a red-bearded poor brahmin, of 'western' appearance, with a crook, a tablet inscribed with incantations and a censer in his hands, a leopard skin draped across his shoulders, and a bull's head on his head-dress. To the left of the central figure, just above the Sun, is the deity of the planet Mercury in the form of a woman scholar, with a brush and a scroll in her hands, and the likenesses of a monkey, two *kinnaras* and two birds on her head-dress. Opposite, on the left side of the scroll, is the deity of the planet Venus, with a lute: her hat is decorated with a hen. Above and to her left is the deity of the planet Jupiter, dressed as an official with a tablet in his hand, and a wild boar on his hat. Opposite him is the imaginary planet of Ziqi, the superfluous vapours of Jupiter, dressed as an official with a tablet in his hand, and

wearing a hat which is neither Chinese nor Tangut in appearance. This planet corresponded in the calendar to the extra month which occurred every three years. Above that is the imaginary planet of Yue Bo – the moon-angry planet, in the guise of a woman with her hair loose, the superfluous vapours of Saturn. Opposite her is the deity of the planet Mars, in the form of a fierce god, with a trident, a severed human head, and the head of a horse or donkey in his hair. At the bottom of the scroll are Rāhu and Ketu (Chinese: *Lobou* and *Jidu*), imaginary planet deities who cause solar and lunar eclipses; they are of Indian origin, and are depicted as fierce gods wearing armour.

The Tangut names for the planets are translations from the Chinese. Venus is the planet of Metal, Saturn – of Earth, Jupiter – of Wood, Mars – of Fire, and Mercury – of Water. These names evidently reflect the doctrine of the five elements. Each name then also represents a direction – West, Centre, East, South, North; an animal of the calendar cycle – hen, bull, wild boar, horse, monkey; and the five colours – white, yellow, green, red, black. To the right and left of the Buddha, in circles, are the twelve signs of the Greek zodiac. To his right: Leo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Virgo; to his left: Aquarius, Pisces, Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer. Above are the twenty eight signs of the Indian zodiac, fourteen to each side, and represented in the form of Chinese officials.

Very few scrolls of this subject have survived. No less than twenty four of the Tangut paintings in the Hermitage collection are scrolls of the astrological cult. In addition, some texts in the keeping of the Institute of Oriental Studies at the Russian Academy of Sciences are illustrated with engravings depicting the planet deities. The iconography of the subject





within the collection as a whole displays considerable variations, which is doubtless attributable to the influences of varying traditions. Particularly interesting is this respect are the engravings, illustrating texts of *sūtras*, the mantric text *Ritual Celebrations with a Magic Circle in Honour of the Sacred Mother of the Planets* (translated from the Tangut by N.A. Nevsky), and the doxology (also translated and published by Nevsky) from the *Sūtra Spoken by the Buddha with Invocations to the Great-Valiant Tathāgata of the Luxuriant Fiery Glow or to the Uṣṇīṣa of the Buddha with the Golden Wheel*. The iconography of a painting from Dunhuang in the British Museum collection, and a wall painting in the corridor of one of the Dunhuang caves also bear a close resemblance to the description of the deities in the doxology. The regalia and individual detail of the Khara Khoto scroll are generally identical to those in works from Dunhuang, though there are differences in overall composition and in the iconography of the Buddha figure. As regards composition, the Khara Khoto scroll is closest of all to an unpublished one dating from the Khitan Liao dynasty (the tenth to eleventh centuries) in the Wooden Pagoda in Shaanxi Province in China; a reproduction can be seen in the Historical Museum in Beijing. The Dunhuang paintings are very much in the Tang tradition; they have a freedom of composition which the Khara Khoto scroll has lost, as it were; it appears altogether more organised and finished. The stable iconography of the planet deities, which, as the paintings of Yonglegung testify, lasted until the fourteenth century and is Chinese in origin. Similarities of detail in certain paintings – for instance the figure of the woman with the lute and the figure of the emperor in the scroll *Presentation*

of Regalia to the Emperor of the Northern Song artist U Zungyuan – confirm that our scroll is of the tenth to eleventh centuries. As far as written sources are concerned, the treatise of the Song critic Go Ruoxiu, completed in 1082, refers several times to subjects of this kind. One is worth quoting. The famous 11th century master Son Zhiwei from the Shouning monastery in Chengdu depicted the Buddha surrounded by the nine planets, and then ordered Dun Reni to colour them in. Dun Reni added a lotus flower in the vase held by the figure of Mercury, the Lord of Water. When Zhiwei saw what he had done, his face turned red and he shouted: “That vessel contains the water which controls the Subcelestial Sphere. I learned that from Daozang. How dare you add a flower! You might as well add legs to a snake!” This quotation, incidentally, underlines how fortuitous and unpredictable some iconographic detail can be, and the consequent difficulties that arise in interpretation. The content of the scroll is based on the meanings implicit in the Buddha Tejaprabha. The Buddha of the Luxuriant Fiery Glow was held to be master of the heavens, “tamer of the heavenly bodies, vanquishing all misfortunes”¹. The patron-donor of the scroll aimed to avoid all possible misfortunes emanating from the planets. The depiction of the deity of any planet, which the supplicant saw as influencing his life, would ensure the elimination of any evil emanating from that planet. It was this protective role of scrolls, and their links with horoscopes, which made the planet cult so popular among the Tangut – so popular, indeed, that there were special temples dedicated to the planet deities.

K.S.

¹Nevsky, 1960, vol. 1, p. 72.



12th-13th century

Tangka

On white and blue checkered linen

38.5 × 29.7 cm

(with original mounting 53 × 37.7 cm)

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2454

Literature: Kochetova, 1947, p. 489.

The deity is represented as a fierce green warrior, with one face and two arms. In one arm he holds a sword, in the other a severed head. In his head-dress is a horse, and twisted ribbons hang down his sides. A short cloak is draped across his shoulders, while on his lower body he is wearing a sort of skirt. His attributes – horse, sword, severed head – identify him as the deity of the planet Mars. Yet his green colouration does not fit; Mars is usually associated with red. What we are most likely dealing with is an iconographical muddle. In the top left corner of the *tangka* is an inscription in

Tangut hieroglyphs: “The Planet Li mei”, Yue Bo.¹

The severed head was an attribute of both Mars and Yue Bo.

A green body, a sword and ribbons are the marks of the deity of the planet Rāhu (Lohou). What seems to have occurred is a confusion of three fierce deities – Mars, Yue Bo and Rāhu.

The deity is depicted against a Chinese background.

In the bottom left corner we see the Tangut donor, and in the cartouche the Tangut inscription “the donor [surname] Ie”.

The last three hieroglyphs – his first name – are unreadable.²

The muddled iconography and crude workmanship indicate that the *tangka* was painted locally, in Khara Khoto. K.S.

¹Nevsky, vol. 1, p. 364.

²The hieroglyphs were interpreted by Professor Shi Jinpo, of the Historical Institute of the Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing.



Between 1378 and 1387

Scroll

On silk

77.5 × 51.5 cm

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2432

The Buddha stands in a hieratic posture, on a red lotus flower, surrounded by an oval nimbus. On his head is a three-panelled jewelled crown. His body is coloured gold. He is dressed in green robes with a gold bottom edging, over which is draped a red cloak, covering the left shoulder and hanging down from the right. His left hand is holding his cloak against his chest, while the right arm hangs down his side with the hand open in *varamudrā*. In his right hand he is holding a coin of Chinese type with an inscription, which reads clockwise.

Three hieroglyphs can still be read: *Tian-yuan tong*, while the fourth (*bao*) has been obliterated.¹ The depiction of a coin in the Buddha's hand is something quite exceptional. The red background is embellished with rainbow stripes and scattered flowers. Further down are red shapes with white tips, which allow for various interpretations, possibly mountains, waves or clouds; and at the bottom, a blue-green patterned fabric.

Varamudrā signifies the Buddha's compassion, and, at a more prosaic level, the granting of wishes.² Taken together, this gesture of generosity and the coin suggest the craving of an entirely earthly boon. But such a simple interpretation hardly matches the meaning of the crowned Buddha image – that of Cakravartin, Master of the Universe.

Buddha's role as Master of the Universe is combined here with his role as the generous fulfiller of wishes.

This confusion of different images is of a kind which might well have occurred in a

provincial town in the post-Yuan period.

The coin has taken the place normally occupied by the Wheel of the Law (*dharmacakra*), the symbol of the teaching of Śākyamuni. It is important in a variety of ways: as a means of approaching the scroll's meaning, and as a key to its date, and even perhaps to its historical interpretation.

The device of the rule of Tian-yuan was proclaimed in 1378 by the grandson of the last emperor of the Northern Yuan, Togus Temur, who was killed in 1387. In the same year Ming troops won a decisive battle at Lake Buyüerhai (in modern Inner Mongolia). Shortly thereafter, the Northern Yuan dynasty came to an end. Khara Khoto, then, was still functioning in the 1380s, regardless of the fact that it had been captured by the Chinese in 1372.³ This scroll proves that religious and artistic life continued in Khara Khoto, despite the beginning of the process of Islamisation of the populace.⁴

Taking into account the wretched political and military situation of the Mongols and the impending downfall of their dynasty, it would perhaps hardly have been surprising if the artist or patron decided to place a coin of Tian-yuan in the palm of the crowned Buddha. Combining into one image of the crowned Buddha, Master of the Universe, fountain of compassion, and a coin alluding to an earthly ruler threatened with losing power, might well have represented a last desperate attempt to prop up the failing authority of Togus Temur. (The ruler of Khara Khoto was in fact related to the Imperial house). Nonetheless, tempting such an interpretation may be our first, altogether more down-to-earth explanation of the coin – as an allusion to a gift of wealth – cannot be easily dismissed.

The form of the Buddha's crown also serves to confirm the dating of the scroll to the years 1378-1387. The crown consists of three panels and is a simplified version

of the crowns worn by *bodhisattvas* in the Song and Yuan traditions.

The scroll is of local origin. It lacks warmth, and the colouring is crude. The wide, flared nose is executed in a clumsy, schematic manner. The overall stylistic features of the painting have no parallel in the Khara Khoto scrolls. K.S.

¹The fact that the first hieroglyph in the inscription on the coin should be read as *Tian* was first drawn to my attention by Yang Xin, a curator at the Palace Museum, Beijing.

²Saunders, 1960, pp. 53-57.

³Lubo-Lesnichenko and Shafranovskaya, 1968, p. 46.

⁴Kychanov, 1987, p. 143.



13th century

Statue

Clay with polychromy

Height: 68 cm

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2297

In the photograph of the *suburgan* during excavation, one can make out two small statues – small in relation to the huge statues still half-buried in the desert sands. These are the *Double-Headed Buddha* (Cat. No. 1) and this *Crowned Buddha*. Iconographically, it is similar to the *Crowned Buddha* (Cat. No. 59). Since the right hand is missing, however, it is impossible to tell whether it may have been holding a coin, as in the scroll. It is unfortunate too that we do not know where exactly the figurine was found – in the *suburgan* itself, or in the ruins of the town. Kozlov did not keep precise records of his discoveries.

The scroll and the statue of the *Crowned Buddha* raise an insoluble problem: if the scroll, which can be dated precisely, came from inside the *suburgan*, then the *suburgan* must have been sealed much later than 1227, or, more specifically, after 1390. It may, of course, have been built before 1227, but subsequently re-opened, and further objects put inside – a hypothesis which has been advanced on more than one occasion. The sheer improbability of the hypothesis makes it far more likely that the statue was, in fact, found elsewhere.

The iconographic similarity between the work and the figurine only serves to emphasise the popularity of the Crowned Buddha image amongst the Tangut and the Mongols.

The clay from which the sculpture is made, was a common medium throughout Central Asia. Statues were made, not individually, but using a mould. There were moulds for

faces, ears, arms, the folds in clothing, even hair curls. After an initial moulding, the damp clay could be further modified and modelled. On this statue, further gentle modelling has been performed on the facial features; the corners of the mouth have been given a faint smile; and the size of the hips has been modified.

The iconographical origins of the Crowned Buddha figure are difficult to trace.

A standing Buddha with his right hand in *varamudrā* but without a crown has analogies in a painting on silk from Dunhuang, now kept in New Delhi, and depicting Śākyamuni preaching on Vulture Peak.¹

The iconography of this work from Dunhuang may have its origins in Khotan. However that may be, it, just like the eleventh-century Indian stone reliefs which depict a crowned Buddha, offers only remote analogies with the Khara Khoto figurine. Buddha Śākyamuni was crowned at the moment when he defeated the demon-tempter Māra. There is nothing in our figurine to suggest a connection with these myths, and it is ultimately impossible to link our work with other crowned Buddhas such as Vairocana, for example. The most likely explanation is that the Khara Khoto sculpture represents a local transcription of this image.

K.S.

¹See: Stein, 1921, pls. XIV and XXXIV.



Portrait of a Monk

12th century

Tangka

On cotton

38.5 × 27.5 cm

(with original mounting 64 × 33.5)

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2400

Literature: Oldenburg, 1914, p. 145.

Rhie and Thurman, 1991, No. 91.

A monk, portrayed as a teacher, sits on a throne atop a multicoloured lotus. A rug hangs from the throne, which is of a typically Central Asian kind. The throne has a crosspiece at the top supported by dark-blue golden-tailed leogryphs standing on the backs of elephants. Above the crosspiece are two yellow geese. The monk is sitting in *vajrāsana*, his right hand in *vitarkamudrā* and his left resting on his lap in *dhyānamudrā*. His undergarment is yellow, his robe lilac-brown, and his cloak orange-red. Beneath him stand two donors, both opulently dressed, with gilded head-

might be Uighurs; but they may equally well be Tanguts. Similar women's hairstyles, with a tall topknot covered with a golden net, are to be found in other Khara Khoto works bearing Tangut inscriptions.

From Tangut written sources, we know that portraiture existed as a genre in the Tangut Empire. Portraits of teachers or mentors are known in both the Chinese and Tibetan Buddhist traditions. The iconography of this work is closer to the Tibetan; and the central figure, with his refined, intelligent face, is probably himself a Tibetan. For all that, the manner is quite different from that of known portraits of Tibetan teachers, and inclines towards the Chinese. The careless and clumsy execution of the soles of the feet and the left hand suggest that the portrait was in the process of being re-worked, or was not finished. However tempting it might be to try, it is impossible to either identify the subject, or to say to which school of Tibetan Buddhism he belonged.

K.S.





**Portrait
of a Nobleman**

12th century

Scroll

On paper

45 × 31.8 cm

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2523

Literature: Kazin and Krechetova, 1939.

Lubo-Lesnichenko and Shafranovskaya,

1968, No. 62.

Krechetova, 1969, No. 36.

Maksimova, 1970, pp. 68-70.

In the centre of the picture, three-quarter faced against a pale grey background, stands an elderly man in a tall hat, and a long-sleeved gown with a belt. The rounded neck of the gown shows another garment beneath. Pointed slippers peep out from beneath his gown. His hands are resting on his belt. The face is drawn with

fine red lines and coloured with pink paint.

The fleshy lips are bright pink and the eyebrows, moustache, sideboards and beard are painted in black, streaked with white.

This portrait has analogies in the portraits of five old men from the Sui-yang region of Honan Province.¹ Each picture carries an inscription with the name, age and title of the subject, which warrants their being described as official portraits. As James Cahill's commentary on the portraits suggests, they may have been painted during the lifetime, or shortly after the death, of the subjects, and apparently in connection with some significant personal event.

M.R.

¹Only three have been published. See: *Chinese Album leaves*.... 1961; Wang, 1970.



12th century

Xylograph

45 × 20.3 cm

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2531

Literature: Rudova, 1976,

pp. 44-45.

In the centre, depicted three-quarter faced, is a man sitting on a stool with an impassive expression. He is wearing a tall hat, a long gown with long, narrow sleeves, a belt and black slippers. His hat is decorated with a stylised plant design; his gown is green and decorated with black medallions, possibly curled up dragons. Behind him stands a servant, dressed in a long gown with a decorative motif of circles, and with his hands clasped together across his chest. The servant has long hair, gathered in a topknot, with a fringe across his forehead, and locks falling on to his shoulders. He has hooded eyes, a wide nose, and thick lips. These rather distinctive features seem to stand out in contrast to the impassive face of his master. On the left is a table on carved legs, covered with a table-cloth. On it stands a vase filled with flowering peonies – a symbol of eminence. At the official's feet stands a deer with a bell round its neck – a symbol of high official position, and *ba bao* – the eight precious objects which symbolise wealth: coral, a blazing jewel, a shell, a string of coins, a musical stone, and a book. In the upper right-hand corner is a pine-tree, a symbol of longevity.

M.R.





12th century
Scroll
On silk
71 × 47 cm
(with original mounting 91.5 × 47 cm)
The State Hermitage Museum,
St. Petersburg
X-2465

This is the only scroll in the Khara Khoto collection connected with Taoism. Very little is known about Taoism in the Tangut Empire. We do know, however, that the son of the emperor Yuan-hao, Ningming, was an adept, and died in 1042 "pursuing his study of Taoist disciplines."

There were certainly Taoist monasteries on Tangut soil; for all that, Taoism never had a wide following.

The Chinese traditionally believed that the Heavens were divided into five Palaces. The Central Palace, the dwelling of the Supreme Lord of the Heavens, was centred upon the North Star. The other four Palaces corresponded to the four directions. The Lord of the Northern Palace (quadrant), the Black Warrior Xuan, or Zhen U, was traditionally depicted bare-foot, with his hair loose and a sword in his hand, as in this scroll. The warrior, wearing armour beneath a flapping black cloak with a cape, is sitting on a rock. His head is haloed, and he is holding a sword in his right hand. In the bottom left corner is a tortoise copulating with a snake – a symbol of the Northern quadrant. It is this detail which made possible the certain identification of the central figure.

The remaining figures, who compose the Lord of the North's retinue, are difficult to identify, due to a lack of analogies. At the top left are the half-figures of a man and a woman, hidden by rolling mist. The man is holding a flag bearing what appears to be the constellation of the Northern Ladle (Beidou) (that is Ursa Major). There is a slight problem here: Ursa Major, according





to Sima Qian, is in not the Northern, but the Central Palace of the Heavens. Nonetheless, the arrangement of the stars, and also the presence of the Northern Ladle on bronze amulets in conjunction with Xuan U and the tortoise all support the theory that it is indeed on the flag in this painting.² The spirit of Beidou is embodied in both female and male form (*cixiong*).³ The two figures may then be presumed to be incarnations of Beidou. The Lords of the Quadrants are normally escorted by standard-bearers. The standard bearer in this work is a sage, holding the Northern Ladle in his hand (*jion zi bing dou*).⁴ In the *Sancaituhui* encyclopaedia there is an illustration of the standard of Beidou; the spirit of Beidou is depicted with a smile on his face. The mouth is also open in a grin. As early as the Han period the constellation of the Northern Ladle played an important part in esoteric practices, and was invoked as a means of averting evil and witchcraft. It decorated the cosmic mirrors of the Tang period, and is often found as a motif on bronze amulets.

In popular Chinese belief, the Northern Ladle held sway over death itself, whereas the Southern Ladle exerted an influence on birth.⁵ The former's connection with death is important for an understanding of this painting. To Xuan U's left are two more figures half hidden in the mist. The man in an official's coat is holding a cinerary urn, of a type familiar from archeological finds in the oases of Central Asia.⁶ There are similar painted wooden urns in the Hermitage collection, two still containing the remains of charred bones, and dating from the sixth to seventh centuries. Cremation was the normal way of disposing of the dead among the Tangut, as with the other peoples of Central Asia. Even if we understand this figure correctly, we can do no more than guess at his name. He may be an embodiment of the constellation Xiu –

The Void, which, according to Sima Qian, "controls those affairs, which are accompanied by laments and tears".⁷

In that case, the figure by his side might be the embodiment of the constellation Wei – the Roof. Both of these constellations represent the Northern Palace of the Heavens. Two attributes remain a mystery: the towel on the shoulder of the Wei figure, and the object held by the female figure under the banner.

Thus there emerges a general meaning for the scroll: the donor depicted at the bottom is praying to Xuan U for happiness in the next world. The depiction of the donor raises interesting questions concerning anthropological type and costume. He has coarse features, a prominent snub nose, and is clean shaven. He is wearing a red band round his forehead, and on the back of his head part of a head-dress resembling some kind of vertical panel. He is dressed for riding, in boots, with the skirts of his outer garment gathered up, revealing wide trousers beneath. He has a broad cummerbund with a belt around his waist, and a cape across his shoulders. The Khara Khoto collection has no other head-dress of similar type, which makes it impossible to determine to which class of society he may have belonged. The attributes on the bronze amulets associated with Xuan U (though sometimes the figure of Xuan U himself is lacking), are the sword, the Northern Ladle, and the tortoise and snake. Each according to V. Alekseev, connected with the exorcism of demons and witches, or invocations when building a house facing the north etc. – but have no connection with prayers for happiness in the life hereafter. The invocatory function of the images on the amulets is confirmed by corresponding inscriptions on the verso. The interpretations of Xuan U on this painting, therefore, differ⁸.

K.S.

¹Sancaituhui, III, 1.

²See: Alekseev, 1912, Cat. Nos. 4, 6, 32, 34, 40, 41, 105.

³See: Morohasi Tecuyi, 1969, vol. VIII, p. 778.

⁴See: Palladii, 1889, I, p. 181.

⁵Palladii, 1889, I, p. 181.

⁶L'Asie Centrale, 1977, pl. 81, 91.

⁷Sima Qian, 1986, p. 120.

⁸For general information on Xuan U, see Werner, 1932, pp. 177-178.



12th (?) century

Scroll fragment

On silk

52.5 × 56 cm

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2522

The scroll shows two figures seated facing each other. The monk is sitting on a rock of fantastic shape. He has exaggeratedly 'non-Chinese' features: large eyes with round pupils, a broad nose with flared nostrils and a strange smile. Long hair falls on to his shoulders. He is wearing a monk's robe, with part of his chest and belly exposed, and is bare-footed. In his left hand he is holding a fan or whisk made from a deer's tail – a sign of elevated rank, and attribute of a teacher of *dharma* – and in his right a Fruit of Buddha (*foshou*). His companion is dressed in a red gown, tied beneath his chest with a golden belt, the end of which trails to the floor. Over his gown he has a black monk's cloak – or, at least, the upper garment appears to have no sleeves. On his chest is a rectangular sign, which is a feature of the ceremonial dress of an emperor, and is crucial for the identification of this figure as an emperor.¹ His arms are hidden in his sleeves, yet he still appears to be holding some barely distinguishable object – possibly a jade tablet.

The poor state of preservation of the picture and the lack of inscriptions render it extremely difficult to determine its subject.

There are three possibilities. Firstly, that it depicts one of the *arhats*. Parallels are to be found in the works of Lu Lengjia and Li Gungling, originated from the Song period. However, the lack of a nimbus, and the fact that the two figures are of the same size and, as it were, status suggests a different interpretation. One notices also the lack of

that accentuated expressiveness, that overstatement in the figures' appearance which characterises paintings of *arhats* dating from the Song period.

The second hypothesis, then, is that the painting depicts a real encounter between a teacher and an emperor, for instance, between Bodhidharma and the Liang emperor, U-di (502-550 A.D.). In 528 Bodhidharma, already advanced in years, appeared in Jiankang, the Liang capital. The emperor was an ardent adept of Buddhism, kept many missionaries at court, and had a rich library of Buddhist texts. After meeting the emperor, Bodhidharma stayed only for a short time at the court, before hastening onwards to the north. Many episodes from the life of the patriarch served as subjects for paintings. From the ninth century *Notes on Painting* of Zhang Yangyuan, we know of the existence of portraits of Buddhist patriarchs, as we do of portraits of Indian monarchs who visited China, and in particular the Liang imperial court. There is an intriguing reference to the fact that Yuan-di, son of U-di, and future emperor, himself painted a portrait of a patriarch. Finally, the third hypothesis is that this scroll depicts a conversation between Cheng Guan and the Tang emperor Sgun-Yong which took place in the year 805. The Tangut archive of the Institute of Oriental Studies in St. Petersburg, contains a text which includes a record of this conversation. L.N. Menshikov dates the text to the first quarter of the twelfth century. This xylograph is illustrated with an engraving depicting a table with a censer, to the left of which is sitting a monk with a servant, and to the right – an emperor, escorted by an official.² In other words, the engraving resembles this scroll in subject, and partly also in composition.

The Khara Khoto scroll is finely painted. The outlining of the figure of the patriarch,

in the *baimiao* manner, is executed with great delicacy. The face of the patriarch is highly expressive. Another unusual feature is the mixture of monochrome and polychrome – though it may be that what appears to be monochrome is in fact due to the flaking off of paint.

We can only regret that no more than a fragment of the original work has survived. K.S.

¹Sancitubui, III, 2; Sychev, 1985, p. 123.

²Menshikov, 1984, p. 227, pl. 5.



12th-13th century

Bronze

Height: 12.5 cm

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-3559

12-13th century

Bronze

Height: 17.8 cm

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-3607

These two ritual objects, *vajra* and bell, are attributes of many deities and teachers depicted on *tangkas*. The Sanskrit word *vajra* denotes thunderbolt or diamond. The *vajra* displayed is in fact a *dvivajra*, or *double vajra*. It is used for a variety of ritualistic purposes, and is commonly found in combination with a bell, the handle of which is also in the form of a *vajra*. As a symbol, it dates back to pre-Buddhist times, and was the divine instrument of Indra, the god of Thunder and Lightning. In Buddhism it signified, as Tucci puts it, "the indetectibility of gnosis and the intangibility of Divine Essence."

"The *vajra*," he goes on, "when used in ceremonies, is joined with the bell; the latter is considered the symbol of void, of the insubstantiality of all that appears and thus, by extension, of gnosis. The *vajra* is the symbol of the means (*upaya*) which, when united with gnosis, brings about palingenesis, that is, of pity. In the rite, the *vajra* is inserted into the bell, which is held in the left hand, so as to indicate that the thought of illumination (*bodhi*)... can be born only by the synthesis of the two poles: gnosis-pity."

The Tibetan Khoto *dvivajra* consists of a central core, symbolising the axis of the world, around which are eight prongs.

The prongs curve to meet at the apex of the core, which serves as a ninth point or



prong. This nine-pointed *vajra* alludes symbolically to various semantic groups of nine: the Nine Levels of Mental Concentration, the Nine Truths, the Eight Directions plus the Centre, etc.⁷

At the bases of the prongs there appear to be the badly worn heads of deities, while the cage formed by the curved prongs has been brazed to the core. The core between each cage carries four heads.

This particular *vajra* is of interest because it is an early example, and can be more or less precisely dated – more or less, because, as with many of the other objects in the collection, we cannot be sure whether it came from the “Illustrious” *saburgan*, or from the ruins of the town of Khara Khoto. It is for that reason that

we can date it only to the broad period 1100 to 1400 A.D.

The *ghanta* (bell) also has its symbolic origins in Ancient India. It is widely used in Buddhist ritual and is an attribute of many deities. The shaping of the handle of the bell in the form of a *vajra* implies the unity of the masculine principle (the *vajra*) and the feminine (the *ghanta*). The bell handle is a five-pronged *vajra*, the bases of the prongs emerging from the mouth of a *makara*, a mythological sea monster. The gates of the palace in the *Saṃvara Maṇḍala* take the same form. K.S.

⁷Tucci, 1961, p. 33
Saunders 1960, p. 190



12th-14th century

Bronze

Diameter: 11 cm; height: 4 cm

The State Hermitage Museum,
St. Petersburg

X-3557

Several of the paintings in the exhibition show altars complete with sets of ritualistic altar furniture. Sometimes they are spread out on a rug, or carried in the hands of dancing deities. In front of *Kurukullā* (Cat. No. 25) for example, lie the seven jewels of the ideal ruler, *cakravartin*; in front of the monk in the bottom left corner lie seven objects. In front of *Samantabhadra* (Cat. No. 52) are laid out brushes, a vase, books, and fruit; in front of *Vajravārāhī* (Cat. No. 22) are six dancing deities bearing gifts.

Sets of sacrificial offerings to the gods,

set out on an altar, could consist of eight jewels, or of seven objects (as exemplified above).

In the latter case, bowls would be laid out in front of the seven objects: two were filled with water, a flower was placed in the third, a stick of incense was placed in the fourth, the fifth served as a lamp, the sixth was filled with water, and the seventh with food. The set of ritual objects, and their symbolic value, varied according to the deity involved.

Altars might also carry sets of sacrificial offerings to the five senses: a metal mirror – to the sense of sight, a shell – to hearing, aromatic oils in a cup – to smell, fruit in a bowl – to taste, and, for example, scraps of silk – to the sense of touch. This by no means exhausts the list of items customarily placed upon Buddhist altars but it gives some indication of the importance and

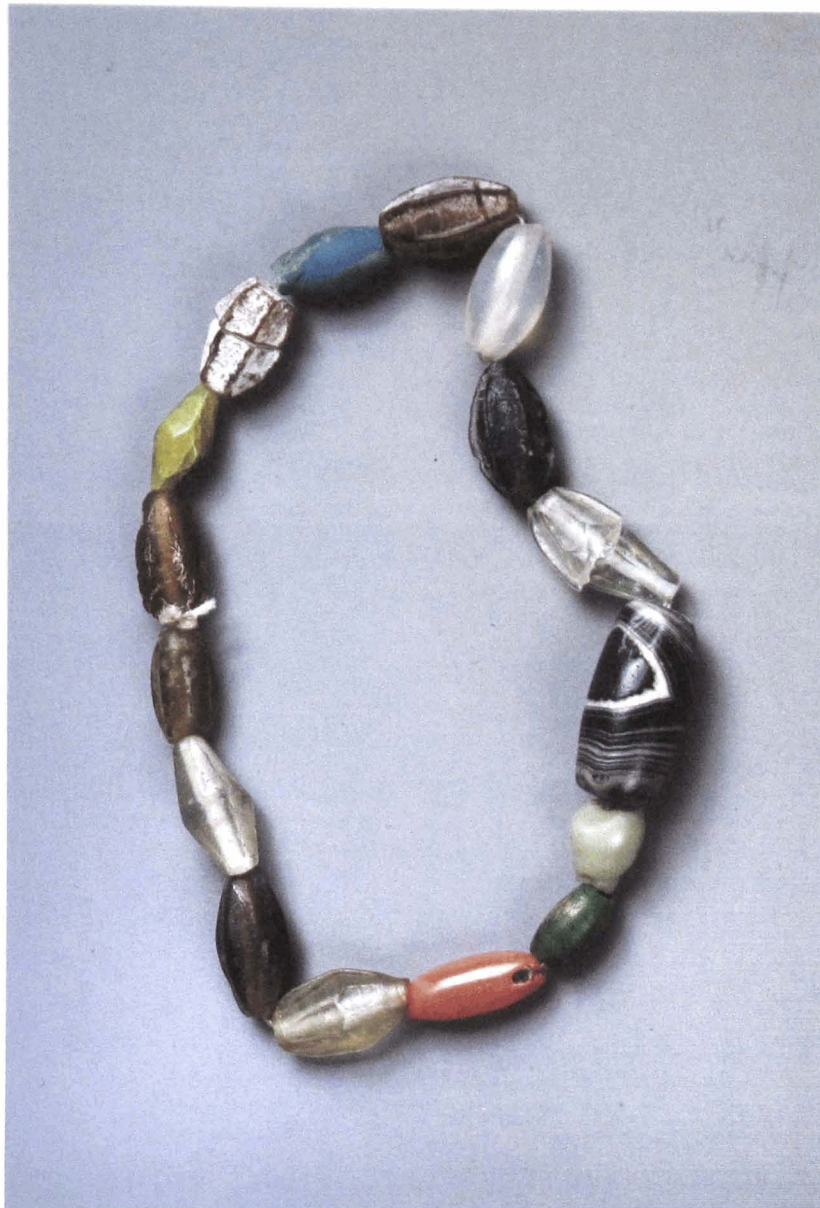
function of the altar-bowl as a ritual object. In form, the cup is very similar to Chinese cups of the twelfth to fourteenth centuries. It is to be regretted that we cannot provide a complete set of altar furniture, such as those depicted in the paintings exhibited.
K.S.



Necklace with Tzi

12th-14th century
 Glass, coral and stone
 The State Hermitage Museum,
 St. Petersburg
 X 2842

The necklace is made up of beads of glass, coral and stone. In the centre is a black white-veined stone amulet, which was intended to bring luck and protect from the forces of evil. Such amulets are highly prized and venerated in Tibet.
K.S.



12th century
Manuscript fragment
On paper
18.5 × 23.6 cm
The State Hermitage Museum,
St. Petersburg
X-2532
Literature: Rudova, 1977, pp. 51-53.

This ink drawing depicts the bust of a man, three-quarter face. His high hat is pinned to his hair. The Tangut text on the recto and verso, written in cursive script, was first read and translated by E.I. Kychanov in 1971. The outline of the face has been traced using a stencil.¹ This no doubt explains why the lines lack the crispness of an original drawing. At the same time, the facial features are sharply defined – heavy brows, eyes with stylised folds for the lids, largely flared nose, sagging cheeks, full lips, drooping moustache, and a furrow beneath the nose. A two-stranded, pointed beard decorates the sharp chin, and the ear is large, with a heavy lobe.

The text categorises every bone in the face – high, low, prominent, sunken etc., and explains their physiognomical significance.

Text on the recto²

(1) If the heavenly centre bone (middle of the forehead) is not straight and reaches the ear, this means that a man will have eminence and distinction.

(-) If the hall of jasper bone is slightly raised, this means longevity, eminence and pride.

(3) If the dragon's horn is raised, then [a man] will occupy a high position.

(9) If the heavenly storehouse bone is prominent and full, then [a man possesses] wisdom, loyalty, strength and tranquillity [joy and happiness].

(10) If the heavenly well bone ...[text missing] ..., then he has eminence and distinction.

(10) If sunken like a furrow, then a man

will own arable land.

(11) If the gates of heaven bone is prominent and full, then... [text missing]... will possess.

(8) If the connecting appearance bone is prominent and full, then a man will have eminence and distinction.

(15) If the earthly storehouse bone... [remaining text lost]

Text (continued) on the verso

Reading from left to right:

(12) If the filial bone is prominent, then [this means a man] will have eminence.

(6) If the jaw protrudes like a raven's tail, as it were a divided [?] branch, then... [corrections in the Tangut text]

(17) [If] the middle of the ear touches the neck, then a man possesses eminence and distinction.

(4) If the 'storehouse... [?]' bone is prominent, then [a man will have] an office and rank of the seventh grade.

(5) If the law and ceremonies bone is prominent, then [a man] will occupy a post of a *sytu*.³

(14) If the outer armour bone and... [text missing] is hard [strong], then [a man] will have eminence and will have sons and grandsons.

(-) [Text missing] ... possesses strength, then [there will be] many sons and grandsons, but if it is sunken [furrow], then there will be no children.

Text on the face

(1) If the heavenly centre bone [middle of the forehead] is not straight and reaches to the ear, then [this means] eminence and distinction.

(3) Dragon's horn [bone].

(3) Dragon's horn [bone].

(13) Storehouse [bone].

(14) Law and ceremonies [bone].

(11) If the jawbone is prominent, like a 'raven's tail', then a man will have eminence and distinction.



(-) Son's house [bone].

(8) If the connecting appearance bone is full, then a man will have eminence and distinction.

(4) Heavenly storehouse [bone].

(5, 6) Heavenly well [bone].

(7) Heavenly gates [bone].

(10) Filial bone.

(-) If the golden [?] pavilion bone is raised and red, then a man will possess gold and power [?].

(15) Outer armour [bone].

(9) Earthly storehouse [bone].

(-) Gates of destiny [bone]

(12) If the middle of the ear touches the neck, then [a man] will have eminence and distinction.

Seventeen bones are shown on the face. Two of them, which are the same (3), have the same inscription. The name "heavenly well bone" (5, 6) is used for two bones, though they are allotted different qualities.

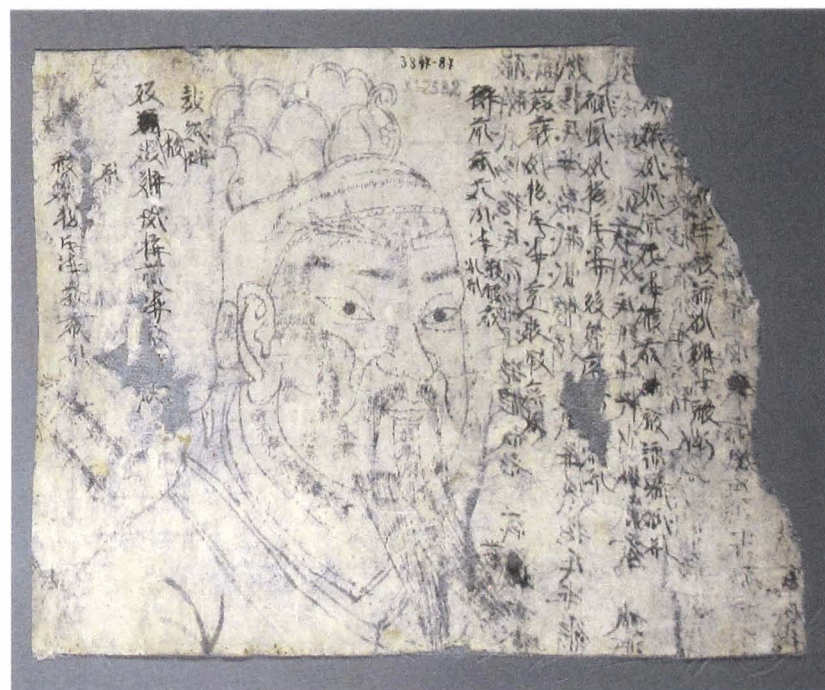
No interpretations are given in the text of the son's house and gates of destiny bones, probably because they were on a part of the paper which has been torn off. Moreover, the text would appear to have been in draft form, since corrections have been made in places. That may explain why the hall of jasper bone, which is mentioned in the text, is not marked on the face. In the text on the verso, the name of the bone is lost (item 16), due to the poor state of preservation; this may have been one of the two unmentioned bones.
M.R.

¹A stencil is a simple means of making copies. An original cartoon is placed over the paper on which the copy is to be made, and the outline of the drawing is traced by pricking holes along the lines with a needle. Ink can then be passed through the holes.

²The translation and the comments in square brackets are E.I. Kychanov's. The numbers in brackets refer to the numbers in the diagram.

A dash in brackets indicates that there is no corresponding text on the face.

³An official in the department of religion and enlightenment.



Verso (above)

Recto (below)

12th-13th century

Manuscript

On paper

27 × 49 cm

The State Hermitage Museum,

St. Petersburg

X-2540

The *sūtra* about Buddhas' Names is an unusual text, part of which is included in the Tripitaka. It consists of an enormous list of names, or, more precisely, laudatory epithets applicable to Buddhas. All Buddhas relate to the ten corners of the world, that is, the four cardinal directions, the four intervening directions, up and down. The repetitious reading of a long list of names of Buddhas – a thousand words

or more – was tantamount to an invocation.

Manuscripts of this *sūtra* were commonplace in Central Asia and, in particular, in Dunhuang.¹

The Khara Khoto collection contains several examples of the *Buddhanāmasūtra*.

Before restoration, this copy from the Hermitage was in 'accordion format'.

It now takes the form of a picture accompanied by text.

The upper row is occupied by twenty crudely and carelessly painted Buddhas, seated on lotus thrones.

Each is in one of four different *mudrās*, some with bare right shoulders, others having their shoulders covered by a cloak.

Above them are parasols. In the lower part of the folio, above the columns of text, is

the lower part of a lotus throne.

It is worth noting that in earlier (seventh to tenth century) analogous manuscripts from Dunhuang, the Buddhas were all printed from one woodblock.

K.S.

¹Menshikov, 1988, p. 114.



Introduction to the Documents from Khara Khoto

Eugeny I. Kychanov

The archives of the Institute of Oriental Studies, St. Petersburg, of the Russian Academy of Sciences, contain the largest collection in existence of written documents from the Tangut state of Xi Xia (982-1227 A.D.). It was found in the course of the Mongolia-Sichuan expedition of 1907-1909, led by the famous Russian traveller and explorer, P.K. Kozlov. Having learned from the geographer and geologist, V.A. Obruchev, about the abandoned town of Khara Khoto (the 'Dead Town', as the Mongols called it), lost amidst the sands of the Southern Gobi, Kozlov, with help from the local Mongols, succeeded in finding it. In March 1908 he made his first exploration of the site and discovered a quantity of documents, paintings, statuary and everyday objects, which were promptly dispatched to the Imperial Russian Geographical Society in St. Petersburg. Experts who studied the documents established that they were Tangut in origin, written in an unknown script, and that the town itself was possibly the lost capital of Xi Xia. This last suggestion held currency for some time in Russia, despite the fact that Father Yakinf (N.Ya. Bichurin), writing in Russian, had shown conclusively that the capital of Xi Xia had been Ningxia (now Yinchuan). Kozlov was ordered to return to Khara Khoto and continue his exploration, which he did in 1909. It was in May 1909 that he excavated a *suburgan* (*stūpa*) just outside the northwest wall of the town. Inside he discovered an enormous hoard of books in Tangut, Chinese and Tibetan, as well as pictures and sculptures. Before 1917 the collection was divided; the written documents were handed over by the Russian Geographical Society to the Asiatic Museum of the Russian Imperial Academy of Sciences, while the works of art and everyday objects went to the Russian Museum – from which they were subsequently

transferred to the State Hermitage Museum. The documents comprise some 8,800 items, of which more than 8,300 are written in Tangut, and about 400 in Chinese. The remainder are in Tibetan or Mongolian. In date, they cover a period from the eleventh to the fourteenth century. They include manuscripts, xylographs (documents printed from wood-blocks) and texts printed using movable type. They are all on paper, which was produced in Xi Xia in factories run by the state. Amongst the world's collections of ancient Far Eastern and Central Asian documents, and particularly of printed books, this one is truly unique.

The vast majority of the works in Tangut (some 80%) are Buddhist in content. The remainder can be divided into four groups: (i) dictionaries and other books dealing with the Tangut language; (ii) documents of an economic or official nature, legal documents, tables of posts and titles in the state of Xi Xia; (iii) examples of original Tangut literature, such as maxims, proverbs, dicta, odes etc.; (iv) Chinese classics, military treatises and other works translated from the Chinese.

The Buddhist texts are illustrated with several dozen engravings, which still remain to be studied.

Prior to Kozlov's discovery, the preeminent scholar in the field of Tangut language and literature was the Frenchman, M.G.

Morisse. In the period preceding the Second World War a major contribution was made by N.A. Nevsky, as well as colleagues from other countries: Ishihama Zuntaro, Luo Fu-cheng, Luo Fu-chang, and Wang Jing-ru. Since the end of the 1950s Tangut studies, acquiring the status of an independent branch of Oriental studies, have gained new momentum. A worldwide community of scholars – among them Nishida Tatsuo, Shi Jin-bo, Li Fan-wen, Huang Zheng-hua, Bai Bin, Luo Mou-

kun, Nie Hung-yin, Chen Bing-ing, Luc Kwanten, Ruth Dannel, M.V. Sofronov, K.B. Keping and E.I. Kychanov – have made great progress in the study of Tangut script, phonetics, grammar, texts, and history. The result is that it is now possible to read practically any text written in Tangut; not that there is nothing left to be done. There remain characters in Tangut script of which we know neither the sound nor the meaning; there is much work still to be done in grammar – particularly syntax; there is no unified reconstruction of the language's phonetic structure; and many documents, particularly Buddhist texts, still await analysis.

Pothi

Manuscript

56 pages; 19.5 × 55 cm-wide

Institute of Oriental Studies,
Russian Academy of Sciences,
St. Petersburg

TANG 357

The paper is of a common type, grey in colour, of local Tangut manufacture. Analysis of this type of paper shows that it was made of flax half stuff, with the addition of some hempen fibre. The leaves are laminated, consisting of several sheets of thin paper pasted together. The text is a compilation. The manuscript, when first catalogued, was given different inventory numbers: 5734, 5744, 5866, 6328. The various parts were brought together only at a later date. There are 29 lines per leaf, and 13 characters per line. The upper margin is 2.2 cm, the lower 2.6 cm. The numbering of the leaves is not consecutive throughout; each ten chapters of the *sūtra* are

numbered separately. In the upper right side margin of each recto is a mark (Chinese: *zhi bao*), indicating that the section in question belongs to the *sūtra Da bao ji jing*, and, more specifically, to the block of ten chapters numbered 101-110. The leaves are foliated, with the same number on both recto and verso. The book was made in Khara Khoto in 1190-1191. The chief client who commissioned it held the post of border emissary and the military rank of commander of campaign troops (*Ngwežwei Sanpu*).

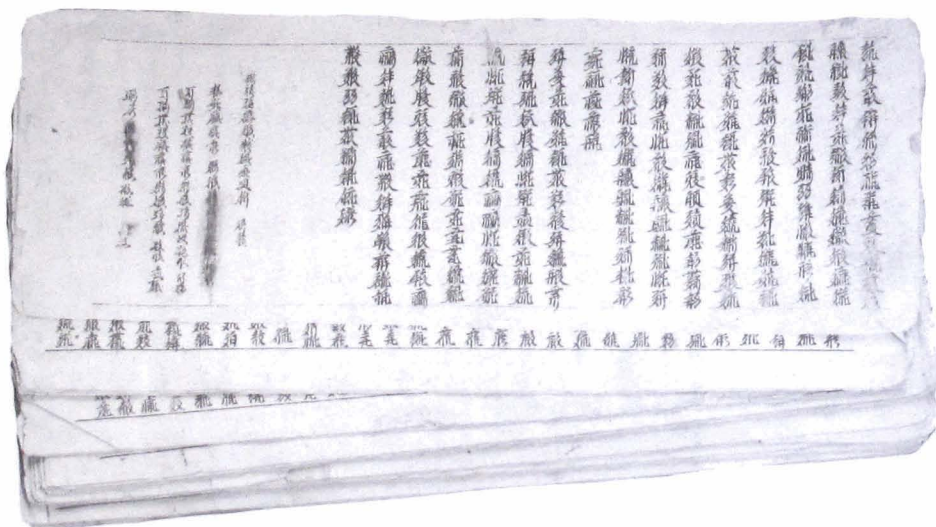
The copyist was Tsiei Ngewewai.

A colophon after chapter 105 reads: "This copy was completed on the eighteenth day of the third month of the year of metal and the pig and under the imperial device Heavenly Assistance (13 April 1191). The chief client is of the spiritual rank of 'he who has come close to virtue' ... (name crossed out). A client who commissioned the copying of a part of the text – one chapter, is a person of the spiritual rank of 'he who has come close to virtue', holding

the post of 'director'.¹ A client who commissioned part of the text – one chapter, is a person of the spiritual rank of 'he who has come close to virtue', the noble gentleman xwa kwo... The copyist, a person of the spiritual rank of 'virtuous man', is Tsiei Ngewewai. The text of this *sūtra*, consisting of 105 *juan* (chapters), was compiled during the Tang dynasty (618-907) by the teacher Puti Liuzhi, who included in his text translations made by others before him, and added to them translations of his own."

E.K.

¹Director – a lowly administrative and military officer rank in Xi Xia. The rank of Junior Director also existed.



Pothī

Manuscript and coloured drawings
2 pages; 10.2 × 22 cm
Institute of Oriental Studies,
Russian Academy of Sciences,
St. Petersburg
TANG 159, Inventory No. 5654

The paper, manufactured in Xi Xia, is white and of good quality, with no thickening or added fibres. Analysis of similar paper shows that it was made of flax or cotton half stuff. In books in the *pothī* format, the paper is laminated. Unable to make thick paper, the Tangut pasted together several thin leaves.

The text on each leaf consists of 15 lines, with 11 characters to the line. The upper margin is 0.7 cm, the lower – 0.7 cm. In the upper right-hand corner of the recto is an abbreviated title and leaf number. At the end of one of the paragraphs of text are coloured vignettes of lotus flowers and a swastika. On the first leaf there is a drawing, executed by hand, of three

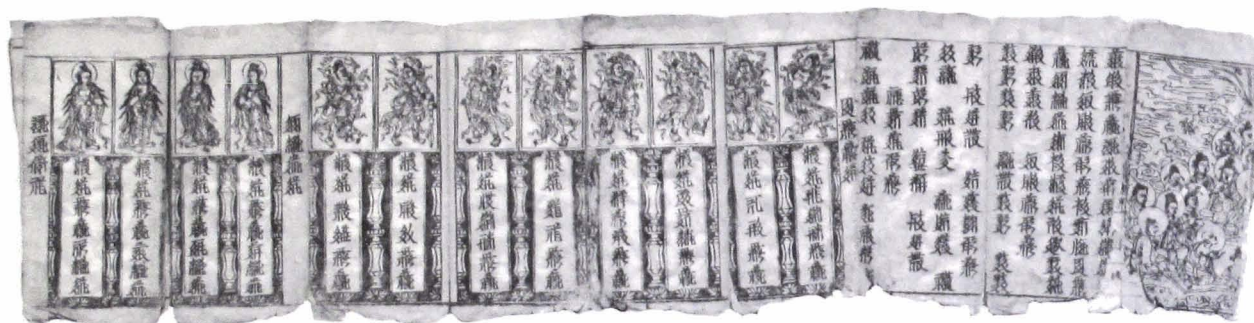
Buddhas: in the centre Buddha Śākyamuni with his hands in *dharmacakramudrā*, on the right – Buddha Amida, and on the left Yaoshi (Bhaiṣajya-samudgat). An inscription above the central figure of Śākyamuni has been obliterated; the only word still discernible is “Buddha”.

The Buddhas are seated on lotus thrones with massive backs, their tops in the form of cloudy nimbuses and two birds with chains in their beaks. From beneath the inscription a ribbon, enclosing flowers, hangs down to either side of the central figure. The Buddhas are wearing brown robes, with their right shoulders bare. To right and left of the Buddhas are worshippers (devotees and donors). The third from the bottom on the left is holding a tablet with an inscription, which is also largely effaced. The first three characters appear to be “star north five...” The number five may refer to the five figures on the left in reverential postures. The largest figure on the right may be that of a donor; he is wearing a robe, boots with curled toes

resembling Mongolian *gutuls*, and holding in his hand what looks like a parasol. The figures of the Buddhas are executed in the Indo-Nepalese manner. There is no *sūtra* in the Chinese Tripitaka with the same title as this text. It may be a variant of the *sūtra Fo shuo jin zhao boruo boluomido jing* (No. 242).
E.K.



Jingan boruo boluomiduo jing
(Vajracchedikā-prajñāpāramitā 'sūtra')



Xylograph

Accordion format

23 leaves, 1 leaf with engraving

19 × 9.5 cm (closed), 204 cm (long)

Institute of Oriental Studies,

Russian Academy of Science,

St. Petersburg

TANG 386 Inventory No. 686

The paper, is grey, of a type manufactured locally, and widely used throughout Xi Xia. Analysis shows that it was made of flax half stuff with added hempen fibres.

There are five lines on each leaf, with twelve characters to the line. The upper margin is 1.5 cm, the lower 1 cm.

There is a prefatory *dhāṇī* (incantatory formula) and verses on behalf of the client who commissioned the printing of the text of the *sūtra*. The client is not named. We then follow the title and the name of the Chinese translator of the *sūtra* Kumarajiva.

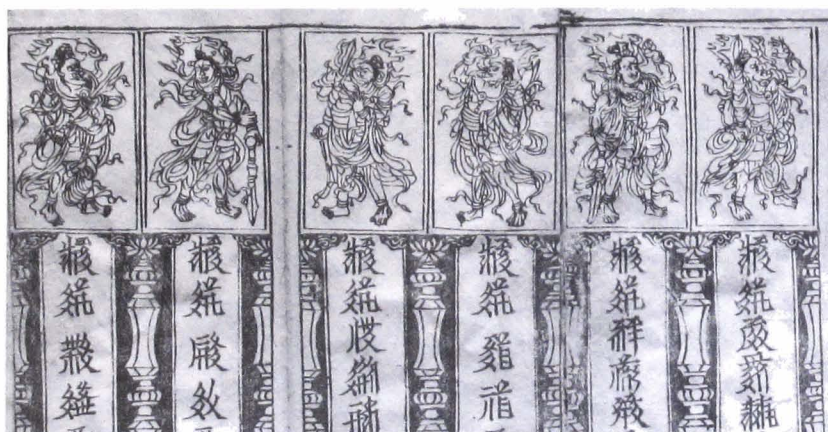
The document consists of depictions of eight Princes-*vajras* and four *bodhisattvas*, with an accompanying text, which reads:

"We invite [invoke] the eight *vajras*:

1) We respectfully invoke the pale blue *vajra*, who delivers us from our troubles.

2) We respectfully invoke the *vajra* who protects from poisons;

3) We respectfully invoke the yellow *vajra*,



to whom sacrifices are made.

4) We respectfully invoke the white *vajra* of pure water.

5) We respectfully invoke... [unknown character] sounds *vajra*.

6) We respectfully invoke the *vajra* who never fails to save us from misfortunes.

7) We respectfully invoke the violet, wise *vajra*.

8) We respectfully invoke the great *vajra* who rewards us for good deeds".

The *bodhisattvas* are invoked thus:

1) We respectfully invoke the *vajra* –

the *bodhisattva* Jingang suo.

2) We respectfully invoke the *vajra* – the *bodhisattva* Jingang lo.

3) We respectfully invoke the *vajra* – the *bodhisattva* Jingang ai.

4) We respectfully invoke the *vajra* – the *bodhisattva* Jingang yu.

E.K.

Scroll (fragments)

Manuscripts

3 fragments: a) 26 × 28 cm; b) 26 × 15 cm;

c) 26 × 15.2 cm

Institute of Oriental Studies,
Russian Academy of Sciences,
St. Petersburg

Inventory No. 8363

The paper is of local Tangut manufacture.
Paper of this type has been found to be
made of flax half stuff, with the addition
of hempen fibre.

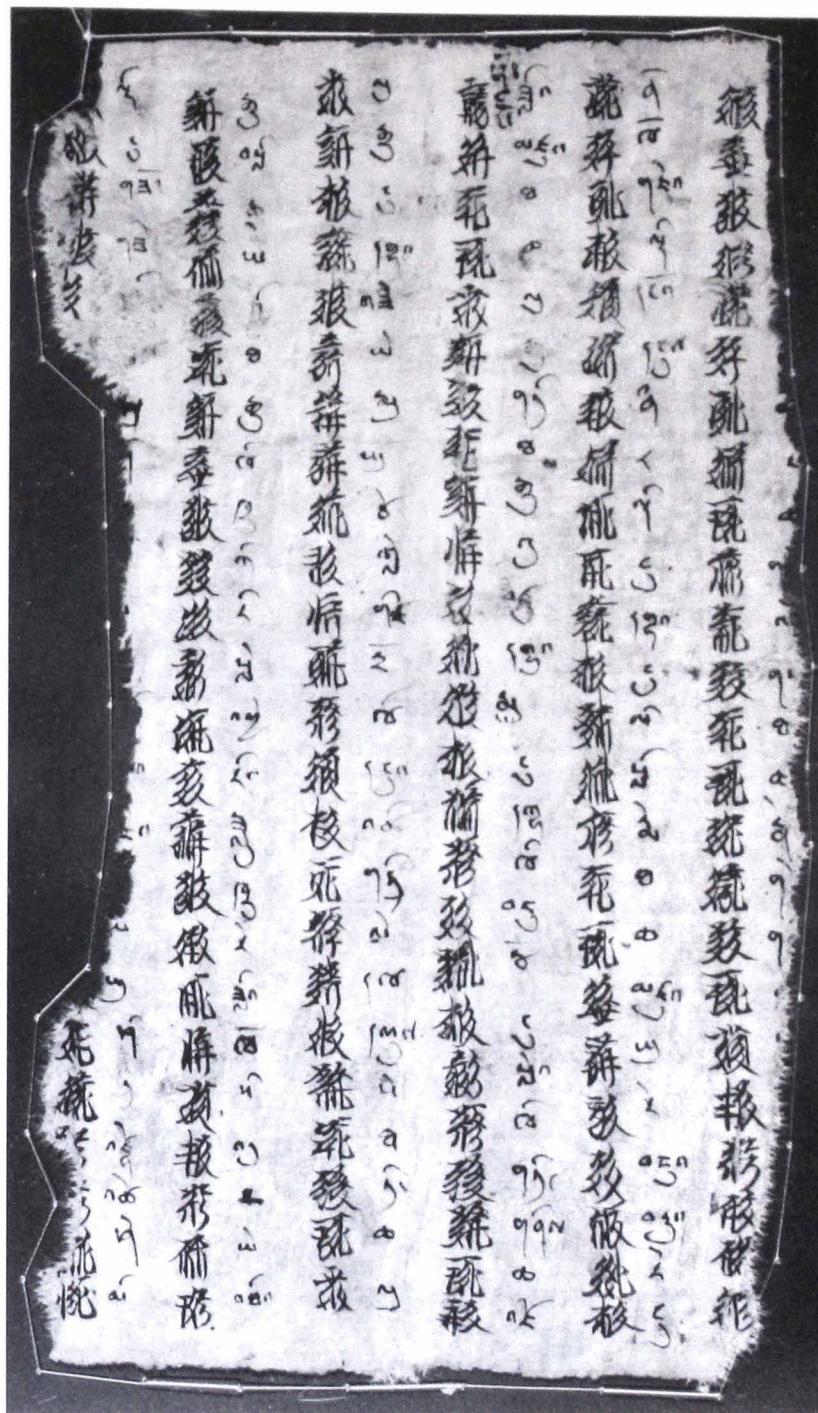
The unidentified text is written in Tangut
with a transcription into Tibetan. It is
written in cursive script, with twenty-three
or twenty-four characters to the line.

It is yogic in content and bears similarities
to three other texts in the Institute
of Oriental Studies' collection of Tangut
manuscripts and early printed books: TANG
340, TANG 222, TANG 223.

Of these three, the first is the closest in
similarities – though
the two are not identical.

This is one of the twenty three surviving
fragments of Tangut texts in which
the Tangut characters are transcribed
into Tibetan script.

E.K.



(Tangut-Tangut Explanatory Dictionary)
 Xylograph and manuscript
 'Butterfly' book, 88 pages
 39.5 × 33.5 cm (closed)
 Institute of Oriental Studies,
 Russian Academy of Sciences,
 St. Petersburg
 TANG 14, Inventory No. 211

The paper is 0.07-0.12 mm thick, grey in colour, of Tangut or Chinese manufacture, with thickenings and scatterings of fibres. The laid lines are horizontal, six to the centimetre, and only faintly visible. The chain lines can hardly be seen at all. The paper may well have been brought back as booty from China.

The surviving document consists of ff. 5, 6, 14, 15. The verso is printed with a Chinese text.

This Tangut explanatory dictionary, arranged according to rhyme, was probably modelled on the *Guang yun* (Chinese dictionary of 1007-1011). It has served as one of the two major keys to the decipherment of Tangut writing. The other is the Tangut-Chinese and Chinese-Tangut dictionary of 1190, compiled by Gule Maocai, and called *A Pearl in the Hand, Answering the Requirements of the Time* (Chinese: *Zhang zhong zhu*). These dictionaries, and a comparison of Tangut translated texts with the Chinese or Tibetan originals, have made possible the reading also of original Tangut documents.

The dictionary is in two parts: firstly, characters with an even tone (Chinese: *ping sheng*), and secondly, characters with a rising tone (*shang sheng*). In both parts characters are arranged primarily according to rhyme, within rhymes according to medials, and within medials according to initials, starting with bilabials and ending with liquids. Groups of homonyms are marked off with small circles. Each complete entry consists of three parts: elucidation of the structure of the

character, explanation of its meaning, and indication of its correct pronunciation by the *fan-qie* method.

All the leaves are printed on the verso with a different text – unique documents dating from 1100-1130, and relating to the history of the Jürchen conquest of Chinese Song territory bordering on Xi Xia. It has still not been clearly established which of the two texts is the earlier – the xylograph dictionary, or the drafts(?) or copies of Chinese documents. The Chinese documents may have ended up in the Tangut Empire as booty, and the dictionary may then have been printed on the verso. This would be unusual, since there are no similar documents and, paper for printing, even though it may have been expensive, does not seem to have been a scarcity in the Tangut Empire. The use of secondhand paper seems even more unlikely, given the importance of this Tangut philological masterwork.

If the dictionary predates the Chinese documents, then we can be sure it was printed before 1123: if vice-versa, the dictionary must date from after 1131.
 E.K.

Handwritten text in vertical columns, likely a medical or historical document. The text is written in a cursive style, with some characters appearing to be in a different script or dialect. The columns are arranged in a grid-like fashion, with some larger characters and some smaller, possibly indicating different sections or entries.

Handwritten text in vertical columns, continuing the document. The text is written in a cursive style, with some characters appearing to be in a different script or dialect. The columns are arranged in a grid-like fashion, with some larger characters and some smaller, possibly indicating different sections or entries.

**Preface to the sūtra: Jin guang ming zui
sheng wang jing (Suvāṇṇaprabhā
sottamarajasūtra)**

Xylograph

Accordion format

31.2 × 59.5 cm

Institute of Oriental Studies,
Russian Academy of Sciences,
St. Petersburg

TANG 376, Inventory No. 95

The paper was made in Xi Xia and is of good quality with no thickenings or admixture of fibre. Paper of this kind is shown by analysis to have been made from flax and cotton half stuff.

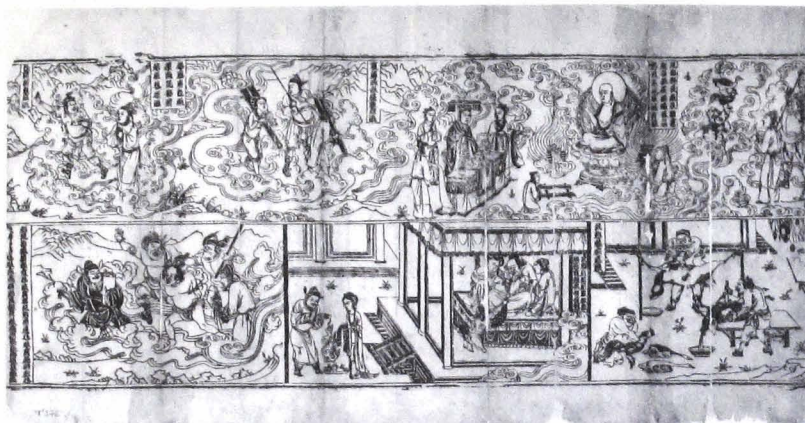
The pictures in the print are arranged on two horizontal lines. The story begins at the right hand end of the bottom line, and is read from right to left.

The preface relates that a certain official, Zhang Ju dao, liked to eat meat and, to this end, regularly slaughtered animals, in other words, destroyed living creatures. This aroused the ire of the higher Buddhist beings, who put an evil spell on him. Zhang Ju dao died and in the next world appeared before Yangluo wang, lord of the Underworld. He was condemned, but then pardoned and sent back to this world to disseminate the *sūtra*.

The *sūtra*, consisting of 10 chapters, existed at the time the Tangut state was founded in a Tang period translation by Yi Jing.

The inscriptions on the print read:

- 1) Ju dao kills sheep and pigs for meat.
- 2) One fine evening Ju dao fell ill, lost his hearing, and could not utter a word.
- 3) [In the next world] Zhang Ju dao first of all saw four men. One was holding a stick and beat Ju dao, one was holding a sack filled with [scrolls listing the evidence of those who had witnessed his crimes?], the third man was holding him by the hair, and the fourth was holding some documents. The hands [of Zhan Ju dao] were bound. Along the way he met petitioners to whom he had done wrong.
- 4) [Zhan Ju dao] was sent to hell.
- 5) Yangluo wang conducts the trial.



Ju dao has come to life again.

6) In the courtroom he was asked questions, and he answered them slowly [in detail].

7) Zhang Ju dao expressed the wish to pay for the copying of ten *juan* [chapters] of the Golden Radiance *sūtra*.

And all those who had petitioned against him were allowed to go to heaven.

The print is a valuable source of information also about the daily life of the Tangut. It offers visual evidence of how they dressed, their headwear, the way they slaughtered animals, the appearance of the inner courtyard of a Tangut house, the ritual of burning bundles of money as a sacrifice to ensure the recovery of the sick, the clothing and weapons of guardians of public order, and of a criminal locked into a *kannga*.

We may also suppose that the idealised image of Yangluo wang would have him dressed in the same way as the emperors of the Tangut State. The people and animals are beautifully drawn. The style is very similar to that of paintings in the tombs of the emperors of Khitan Liao.

E.K.

Da ban nieban jing
(*Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*)

Scroll

Manuscript

29 × 167 cm

Institute of Oriental Studies,
Russian Academy of Sciences,
St. Petersburg

TANG 335, Inventory No. 6025

The paper is a common type, of Tangut manufacture, and grey in colour. Fabricated from flax half stuff with added hempen fibre. The boards are blue, and consist of laminated paper covered with fabric. It would appear that the Tangut could not make cardboard. The cover bears the remnants of a label, pasted on, and bearing an abbreviated version of the title of the text.

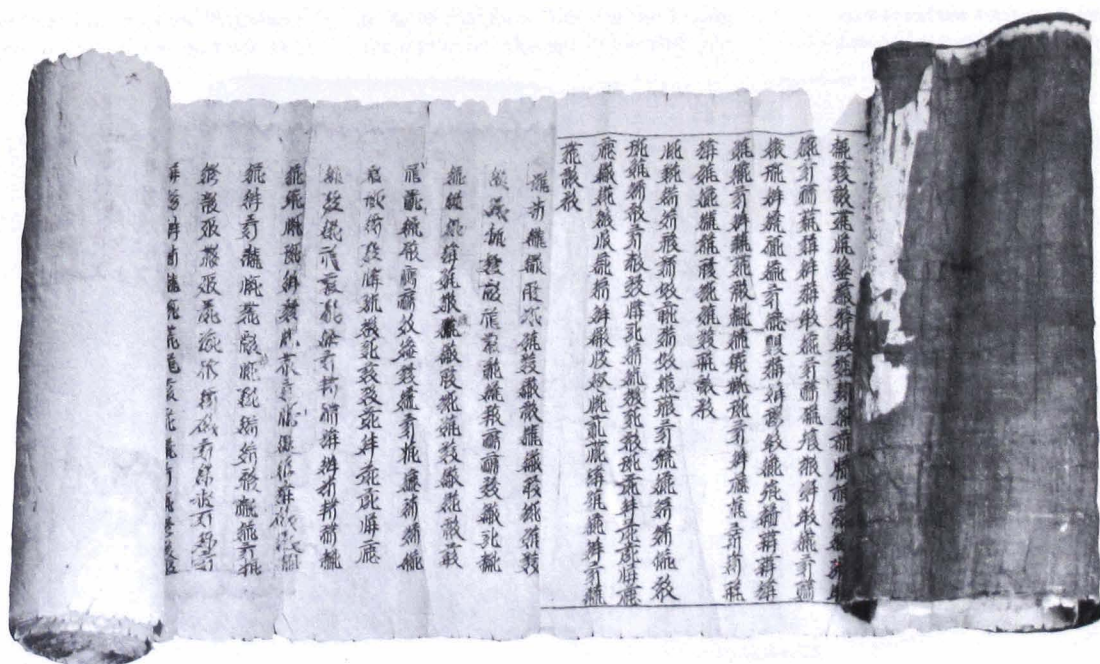
There are 20 characters to the line. The text is written in standard script, which is

normal for copies of *sūtras*. The upper margin is 3 cm the lower 1.5 cm. The title is followed by four characters from the title of the emperor Ren-xiao, who reigned from 1139-1193. At the end of the chapter (13 metres of scroll) the title is repeated and there is a mark (Chinese: *zhi bao*) indicating that the text is taken from the third ten-chapter section of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*. In two places, for some reason, large sections of the text have been obliterated with cinnabar. The second folio has been mended with paste; the repair was done in Xi Xia. In another copy of the same text of the *sūtra* in the Institute's collection (Inventory No. 8014), the text of chapter 31 contains the name of a restorer, Lion kion kaui. This complete text of the *sūtra* on scrolls was copied at the expense of the Liang family, who were

to all intents and purposes in control of the country in the middle of the 9th century, and provided two empresses of the imperial household. The copy was made in the middle of the twelfth century; chapter 28 bears the date 1154.

The *sūtra* exists in both *mahāyāna* and *hīnayāna* versions. The text of the document presented here is from the *mahāyāna* version, which contains 40 *juan* (chapters). It was translated by Yun Wu qie in the Northern Liang period.

E.K.



**Fo shuo fo mu chu sheng san fa yang
boruo boluomiduo jing**
(*Daśasāhasrikaprajñāpāramitāsūtra*)

Late 12th century
'Butterfly' book
Manuscript and xylograph
88 pages; 25 × 15.5 cm
Institute of Oriental Studies,
Russian Academy of Sciences,
St. Petersburg
TANG 164, Inventory No. 206

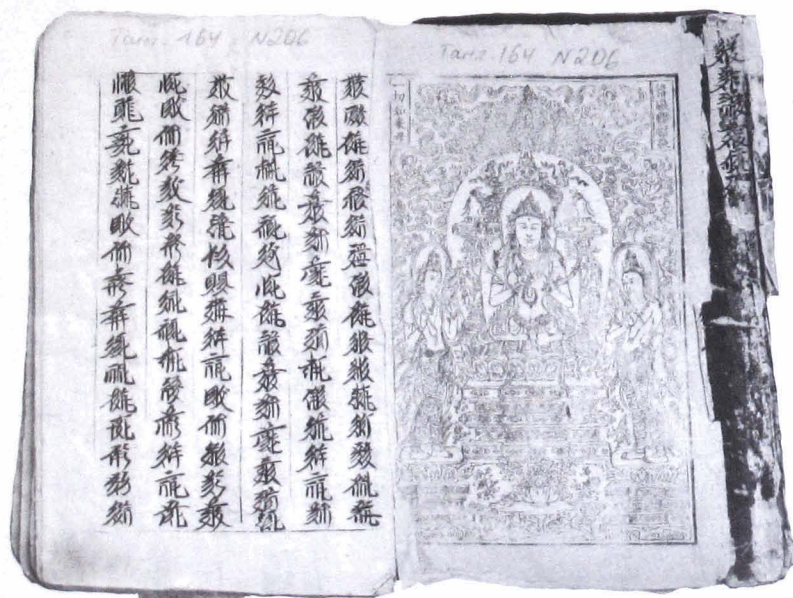
This 196 folio manuscript is written on common grey paper of Tangut manufacture, fabricated from flax half stuff with the addition of hempen fibre. The cover is of blue fabric. There are six lines on each leaf, with sixteen characters to the line. The lines are ruled with undiluted Chinese ink. Each chapter is headed by an engraving; at the end of each chapter the title is repeated. Between the two chapters the following is inserted "The merciful, great and philanthropic supreme teacher of two emperors, who has committed himself

entirely into the hands of the Buddha."

The text would appear to date from the early 1180s; the manuscript of Chapter 18 of this set is marked with the date 22 August 1182. The complete *sūtra* consists of 25 chapters, and was translated into Chinese by Song shi during the Zhao dynasty (315-350 A.D.).

The engraving is in the Indo-Tibetan style and depicts *Prajñāpāramitā* (transcendent wisdom), embodied in the form of a Tantric female deity, the mother of the Buddhas. The engraving has inscriptions in Tangut (on the right) and Chinese (on the left). Both read "*Prajñāpāramitā* – Mother of all Buddhas."

E.K.



Mid-12th century
Manuscript and xylographs
Accordion format
72 pages; 29.1 × 14 cm
Institute of Oriental Studies,
Russian Academy of Sciences,
St. Petersburg
TANG 334, Inventory No. 1446

The paper is of good quality, manufactured in the Tangut Empire, and probably fabricated from flax and rag half stuff. It has a blue fabric cover, with a framed label. The cover bears an identification mark (Chinese: *zhi bao*), indicating that the text is from the block of chapters 391-400 of the above-named *sūtra*.

The text, which is complete, is on 67 leaves, with two leaves of engravings. The title is followed by an identification mark, two characters from the title of the empress Liang, mother of the emperor Bing-chang (1067-1086) and two characters from the

title of Bing-chang himself. At the end the title and the identification mark are repeated.

The whole of this copy of the *sūtra* dates from 1152-1156. The chief client was a ngü khwi ew, who commissioned it together with his three younger brothers in memory of their late mother Ngai Phon, in the region of Nanyuan.

The *sūtra* was translated into Chinese by Xuan Zhuang, famous for his pilgrimage to India. It comprises 600 *juan* (chapters). The most widely distributed section of the *sūtra* was the first part, consisting of 400 chapters. This 400-chapter section was frequently copied in the Tangut Empire, and the St. Petersburg collection has several different copies. The collection has only one incomplete copy of the remaining 200-chapter section. This exceedingly bulky *sūtra* seems to have circulated only in manuscript form. Although the Tangut could print by xylograph or movable type,

no such edition of this *sūtra* is known. The engraving depicts, on the right, the Buddha preaching the *prajñā* and on the left, a Protector of the Law (or of the Teaching), whose appearance was intended to inspire terror in all living beings whether human or animal. He is dressed and equipped like a warrior of the period. The engraving bears the following inscriptions, reading from left to right in the frames "1) Protector of the Law (*dharmapāla*). Ga-te [part of an invocatory formula] 2) Ga-te, ga-te, ga-te 3) Para samgati bodhi svaha [invocatory formula] 4) the Buddha preaches the *prajñā*."

E.K.



Sheng miao jixiang yhen shi ming jing
(Āryamañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti)

Xylograph

Accordion format

29 pages; 20 × 9.5 cm (closed)

Institute of Oriental Studies,
 Russian Academy of Sciences,
 St. Petersburg

TANG 63, Inventory No. 707

The paper is of Tangut manufacture, thin, grey, with many thickenings and fibres. Fabricated from flax and cotton half stuff. The cover is of silk; half is missing. There are 22 leaves and 2 leaves of engravings. The upper margin is 1.8 cm, the lower 1.4 cm. The title of the *sūtra* is given in Tangut and Sanskrit (transcribed into Tangut), which is normally a certain indication of a translation from the Tibetan. There are marks in the text, made in Chinese ink. The xylograph is undated. Yet, sources indicate that this *sūtra* was translated by the monk Zhi Hui after the downfall of the state of Xi Xia, during the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368). The engraving, which is in the Nepalese style, depicts Buddha and Mañjuśrī. It was repaired with paste while still in the Tangut State.

E.K.



82. Mingzhou nü-wang-da-kong-jue jing
(Mahāmāyūrīvidyārājñīsūtra)

Xylograph

Accordion format

86 pages; 26 × 12 cm

Institute of Oriental Studies,
Russian Academy of Sciences,
St. Petersburg

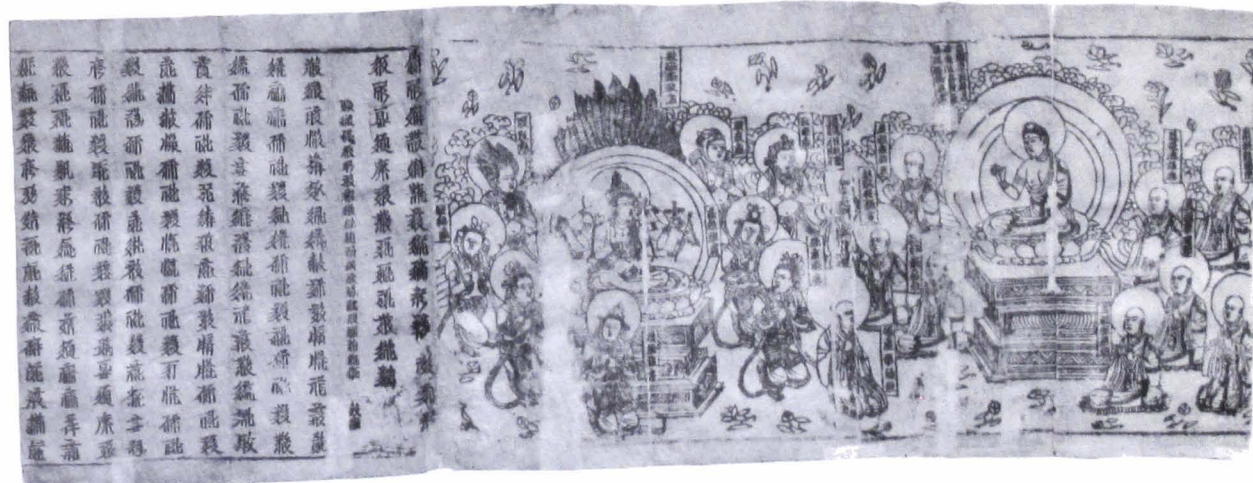
TANG 61, Inventory No. 1

The text consists of eighty six leaves,
written on one side of the paper.
There are six lines on each leaf,
and sixteen characters to the line.
The first leaf carries the title, written in
Tangut. A large engraving covers leaves 2

to 5: on its left is depicted the goddess
Mahāmāyūrī, "the Great Peahen Daughter,
Queen of Incantations, Holy Mother of the
Planets," seated upon her throne. Around
her are the beings who compose her
pantheon – four *mahārāja-lokapālas*,
guardians of the four cardinal directions,
nāgarājas, *rākṣasas* and *asuras*.

The manuscript was restored in the twelfth
century in Khara Khoto. In the inscriptions
around the figures in the engraving the ink
has run, as a result of which they are barely
decipherable.

E.K.



**Ancient Tibetan documents of the
11th-12th centuries from Khara Khoto in
the collection of the Institute of Oriental
Studies of the Russian Academy of
Sciences, St. Petersburg**

Lev Savitsky

The ancient Tibetan documents from Khara Khoto on display in the exhibition can truly be described as almost unique, since very few examples indeed have survived of the written culture of 11th-12th century Tibet. These exhibits testify not only to the close connections between the cultures of Tibet and the Tangut state of Xi Xia, but also, more specifically, to the profound influence which Tibetan culture exerted over that of its neighbour.

The nature of the exhibits makes it clear that this collection of documents did not end up all together in a *stūpa* by mere chance, but that there were a variety of good reasons for their being there.¹

The presence in the *stūpa* of Buddhist texts (Cat. Nos. 84, 87) is simple enough to explain: Mahāyāna Buddhism was the official state religion of Xi Xia, and about thirty-five percent of all Tangut Buddhist writings were in fact translations from the Tibetan.

The Magic Circles (Cat. Nos. 85, 86) were intended to protect the *stūpa* and its contents from evil forces – specifically, from a whole group of Tibetan pre-Buddhist deities known as the ‘Lords of the

Earth’ (*sa-bdag*). The presence of these documents in the tomb – a traditional Tibetan practice – underlines how widespread Tibetan popular culture was among the Tangut. It should, however, be noted that by the eleventh century the ‘Lords of the Earth’ had already been absorbed into the Buddhist pantheon, and had been allotted places among the retinue of the higher ranking deities of Indian origin.

Two of the five documents (Cat. Nos. 86, 87) are dedicated to women: this doubtless ties in with the fact that it was a woman of high social station who was buried in the tomb.

Such are the results of an initial examination of the documents on display. Clearly, the Tibetan artefacts from Khara Khoto present fertile ground for further, more detailed study, as does the whole question of the interrelationship of the Tangut, Chinese and Tibetan parts of the collection.

¹See: discounting document KhT-5, whose function has not yet been clearly established.

Early 13th century

Manuscript

One leaf: 24.8 × 12.7 cm

Institute of Oriental Studies,
Russian Academy of Sciences,
St. Petersburg

XT-5

This is a fragment of a manuscript that may have been a handbook listing stipulated numbers of invocations or incantations, or even an inventory listing quantities of something. The left half has been cut off, apparently together with some text, which makes even more precarious any attempt to define the document's content.

The paper is thin – between 0.5 and 0.6 mm. The laid lines are spaced at eight to the centimetre, and run at right angles to the length of the folio and the lines of text.

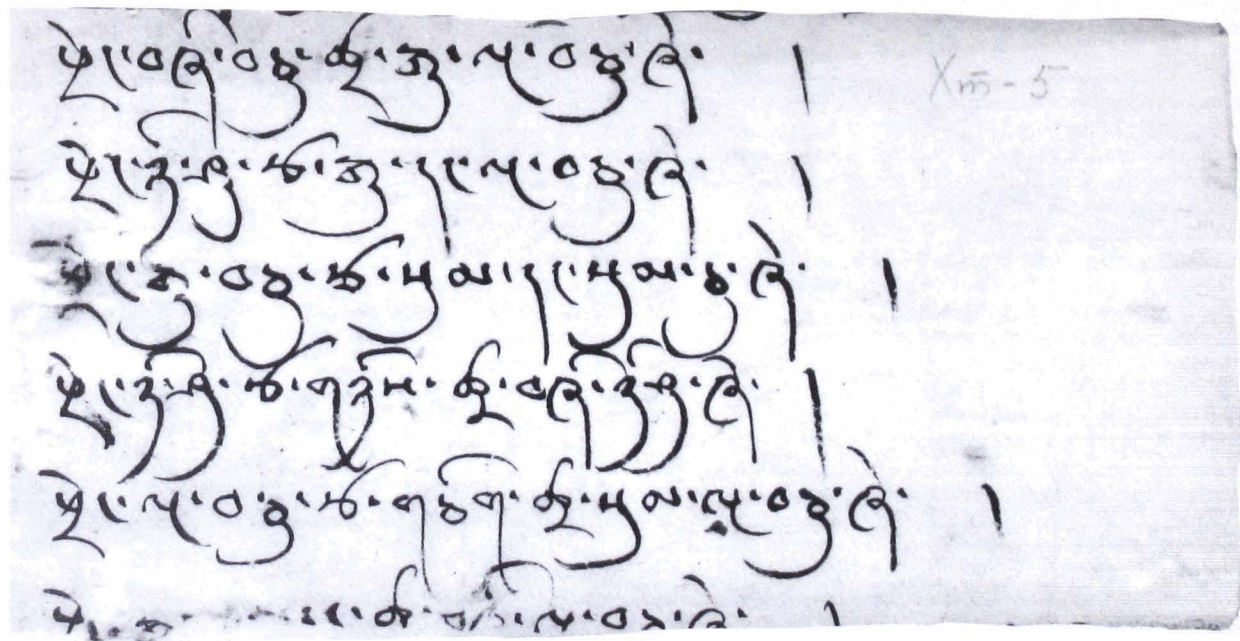
It is written in a script which falls somewhere between formal (*dbu-can*) and cursive (*dbu-med*), though rather closer to the latter. The hand is confident and free, the work of a professional scribe. It was written with a *qalam* (a stick of wood or reed with a split tip); the medium is Chinese ink. The text is written only on the recto and consists of the following numbers:

"phreng-bzhi-bcu-tshar-gu-lnga-bcu-zhe-/
phreng-nyi-shu-rtsa-gu-dang-lnga-bcu-zhe-/
phreng-gu-bcu-rtsa-sum-dang-sum-cu-zhe-/
phreng-nyi-shu-rtsa-gnyis-tshar-bzhi-nyi-
bzhi-nyi-shu-zhe-/
phreng-lnga-bcu-rtsa-gcig-tshar-sum-lnga-
bcu-zhe-."

It is impossible to draw any single conclusion about what this might signify. The apparently most obvious, though

clearly not the most plausible, translation of the top line is: "If one takes 40 nine times, there will be 54." This document requires further study.

L.S.



**Part of the bka'-gyur (Kanjur) section
of the Tibetan Buddhist canon,
based on the Prajñāpāramitā**

Late 12th century

Poṭhī

Manuscript

18 leaves; 22.5 × 9 cm

Institute of Oriental Studies,
Russian Academy of Sciences,
St. Petersburg
XT-16b

The paper is white with a light brown tinge, attributable to the passage of time. The laid lines (8 to the centimetre) are barely visible, and run along the length of the page, parallel to the writing. The thickness varies from 0.14 to 0.16 mm. This type of paper is found in other manuscripts from Khara Khoto, though the remainder are all written in Tangut.

This is of Tangut manufacture.

The manuscript dates from between 1150 and 1227, when the Tangut Empire was overrun by the army of Genghis Khan, and by which time the body of a lady of high social station had already been laid to rest in the "Illustrious" *stūpa* or *suburgan*, together with a hoard of treasure including a huge quantity of documents in Tangut, Tibetan and Chinese.

Eighteen leaves have survived: 3-14, 16, 17, 19-22. Although the beginning is missing, the end has been preserved.

The Tibetan title according to the colophon (f. 22-b2-3) is: *'phags-pa-shes-rab-kyi-pha-rol-du-phyin-pa-sdud-pa-tshigs-su-bcad-pa*.

The Sanskrit title is not given in the colophon, which is normal practice.

The Sanskrit title of this work from the Kanjur (*bka'*-*'gyur* – the "translated word" section of the Buddhist canon) of the Nartan (*snar-thang*) edition, Tibetan archive of the Institute of Oriental Studies, St. Petersburg of the Russian Academy of Sciences,¹ section "*khri-sna-tshogs*",² is: *Ārya-prajñāpāramitā*.

In the Kanjur of the Derge (*sde-dge*) edition this work (bearing the same Tibetan and Sanskrit titles) is found in the section "*shes-*

rab-sna-tshogs", vol. "*ka*", ff. 1-19-b7.³

The manuscript is written in formal (*uncial*) script (*dbu-can*). The hand is firm, regular and graceful, suggesting the work of a professional scribe. His instrument was a *qalam*, a stick of wood or reed, its tip sharpened and split. This can be seen from the alternation of fine (usually vertical) and broad (horizontal and sloping) lines. The medium is black Chinese ink, and both sides of the paper are used.

The manuscript's colophon, as in the majority of canonical writings drawn from the Kanjur, makes no mention of an author, since this role was traditionally attributed to the Buddha Śākyamuni. The translators' names, however – also in accordance with tradition – are mentioned: Byid-tya-ka-ra-sing-ha (Vidyākaraśiṃha) and Dpal-brtsegs. Dpal-brtsegs, a famous translator from Sanskrit into Tibetan, lived and worked in the ninth century. It is certain, therefore, that the text of this manuscript was translated from the Sanskrit no later than that time.

The text itself is a short exposition in verse form of a well-known *mahāyāna* teaching about *prajñāpāramitā*, itself one of the most important doctrines of northern Buddhism.

The verse form is syllabic, that is based on repeated periods of a fixed number of syllables. The periods are eleven syllable-words in length.

The text is identical to that of the same work in the Kanjur of the Nartan edition, starting at folio 215-a2, from the words:

"gyur-pa / de-tshe-bdud-ni-dga'-zhing-mchog-tu-nyams-bder-'gyur/."

The form of certain Tibetan words in T-16 bears similarities to that in 9th to 10th century manuscripts from Dunhuang in north eastern Turkestan. In both, for instance, we find the form *myed* instead of the later *med*, and *myi* for *mi*. The forms *med* and *mi* are already found in the Kanjur of the Nartan edition. This is the most authoritative text in Tibet, going back to

the manuscript corpus of Buddhist canonical writings put together towards the end of the fourteenth century in the monastery of Nartan in south-west Tibet, not far from the Nepalese border. There is also the possibility that the Nartan edition was itself affected by editorial modification of certain words.

There is further evidence of the text *Ārya-prajñāpāramitā*, which is contained in this manuscript, having been translated as early as the ninth century – namely, it is mentioned in one of the earliest Tibetan catalogues of Buddhist writings translated from the Sanskrit, composed in the ninth century by a group of Tibetan scholars led by Dpal-brtsegs. This catalogue forms a part of the Tanjur (*bstan-'gyur*), the second (commentary) section of the Tibetan Buddhist canon.⁴

The catalogue tells us that the text of *Prajñāpāramitā-saṃcayagāthā* consists of 300 *śloka*s. A *śloka* is a verse period of four groups, each containing eleven syllable-words. Each eleven syllable group is traditionally marked off in the Tibetan text by vertical lines.

L.S.

¹Henceforward: TA SPOI.

²Number B-14291, vol. "*ka*", ff. 196-b6 – 222-a5.

³TA SPOI, Number B-10128; A Complete Catalogue of the Tibetan Canons, Derge Edition, Sendai 1934, p. 5, Number 13.

⁴TA SPOI, Tanjur, Beijing edition, section mdo-'grel, vol. cho, number B-14245, ff. 353-a7; *The Tibetan Tripitaka*, 1962, pp. 830-831, No. 5851.

**Magic Circle
or Circle of Protection
(srung-'khor)**

Early 13th century

Xylograph

24.5 × 19.5 cm

Institute of Oriental Studies,
Russian Academy of Sciences,
St. Petersburg

XT-23

Literature: Ogneva, 1975, pp. 61-69.

The document consists of one leaf, with uneven edges, printed on the recto. The upper right corner has been torn off and lost, but the illustration is unaffected. The illustration, contained within a frame, measures 15 × 19 cm.

The paper is white with a brownish tinge, thin (0.12 – 0.13 mm), and of Tangut manufacture. The laid lines (eleven to the centimetre) are faintly visible, running parallel to the length.

The illustration depicts an outspread boar's hide with a circle in the centre. Within the circle is a square with its corners towards the four cardinal points, and within the square is another circle containing a Tibetan text. Another single-line text runs within the circumference of the large circle. There are four inscriptions across the corners of the square. All the texts are in Tibetan, except that the right hand part of the large circle contains a Sanskrit text. The inscriptions are all incantations and invocations to ward off illness and misfortune. It was also intended to serve as a protection against the so-called Lords of the Earth (*sa-bdag*), deities capable of doing good or evil (mostly the latter). These were local, that is Tibetan, deities, predating the introduction of Buddhism, the early seventh century. In the tenth to eleventh centuries they were absorbed into the Tibetan Buddhist pantheon as members of the circle of ancillary deities who surrounded the true Buddhist deities. The Lords of the Earth were a numerous order in Tibet, including some deities who had authority over everything built upon

the earth. The leader of this group had a human body and a pig's face. The magic circle, with its symbolic depiction of a Lord of the Earth in the form of a boar's hide, would appear to have been intended to protect its owner against the machinations of this particular god.

The majority of the invocations inscribed within the two circles and the square of the Magic Circle seek protection from illness – something hardly required by someone already dead. It is more likely that the Magic Circle, placed inside the tomb, was intended to counteract the evil influence of a Lord of the Earth, protecting the *stūpa* and everything it contained.

L.S.



Early 13th century

Xylograph

24 × 24.5 cm

Institute of Oriental Studies,
Russian Academy of Sciences,
St. Petersburg

XT-21

This Magic Circle or Astrological-protective Circle (*srid-pa-bo*) is printed on the recto of a single leaf. The illustration is contained within a frame measuring 18.7 × 21 cm.

The paper is white with a slightly brownish tinge; it is thin (0.6 – 0.7 mm), and of local Tangut manufacture. The laid lines (11 to the centimetre) are very faint and run horizontally, parallel to the length of the folio. Although the laid lines are the same as in catalog number 85, the paper is thinner.

The illustration depicts a tortoise stretched out on its back, on which are marked seven concentric circles.

The diameter of the outer circle is 14.7 cm, and of the inner 3.7 cm.

Invocations in Tibetan and Sanskrit, seeking protection from all manner of misfortunes, and promising prosperity and happiness, run round the circumference of the four largest circles. Within the fourth circle (counting from the centre) are invocations which finish with the Sanskrit word *svāhā* (here in its Tibetan form *sb'a-b'a*), indicating that this is a so-called female circle (*mo-'khor*) intended to protect a woman from evil powers. In the third circle are the names of various animals – horse, sheep, monkey, hen, dog, pig, mouse, bull, tiger, hare, dragon, snake – corresponding to the traditional Central Asian twelve-year cycle. The circular arrangement not only reflects the ever-repeating nature of the twelve-year cycle, but also emphasises that the protection and luck it affords will last for ever. In addition, the circle served to remind the owner that

in, for instance, the year of the mouse, he may expect increased activity on the part of the mouse-faced Lords of the Earth, in the year of the pig – of the pig-faced, and so on...

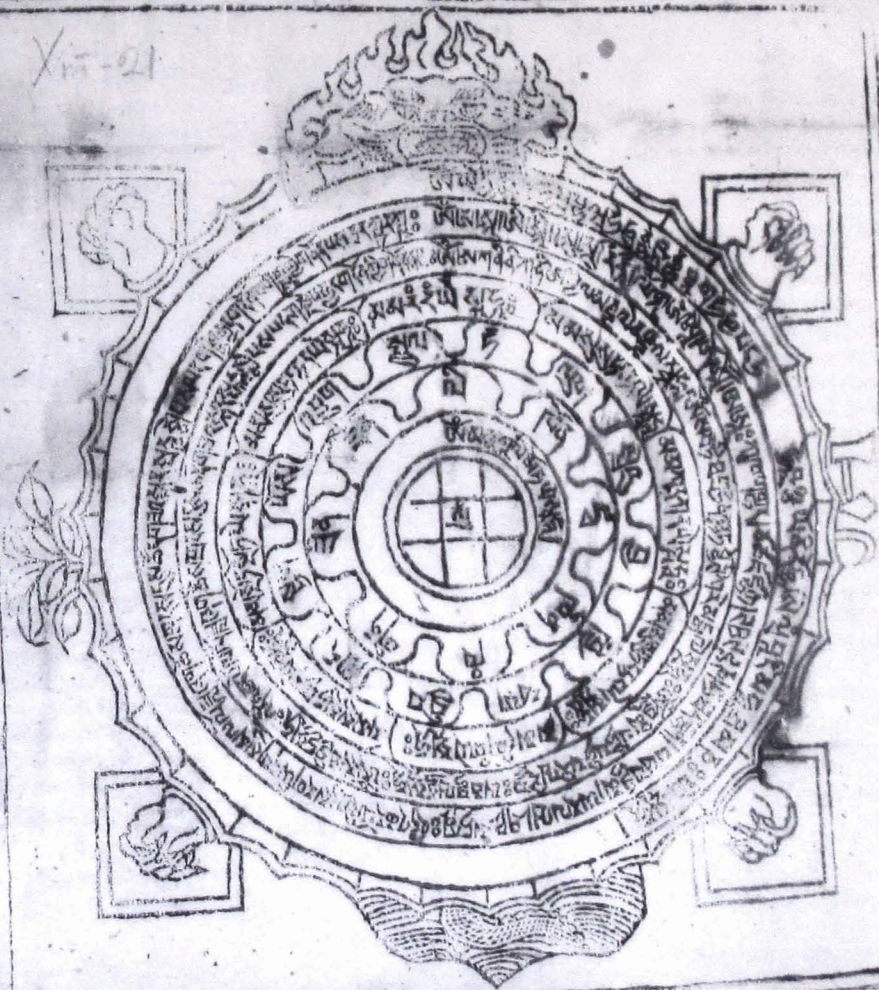
The tortoise (*rus-sbal*) is noted for its longevity; it may well have served as an additional symbol of the enduring effect of the Magic Circle.

Then as now, this circle was traditionally carried in the form of a flag at the head of Tibetan wedding and funeral processions. Its presence in the Khara Khoto *stūpa* is explained not only by its having probably been carried in the funeral procession of the woman buried there; it was also presumably enclosed in the tomb to protect her after death from the malevolent Lords of the Earth.

Wherever they were put, both Magic Circles (Cat. Nos. 85, 86) would have had the power to protect from evil the place in which they lay.

L.S.

Xm-21



Late 12th century
 'Butterfly' book
 Xylograph
 23 pages; 13 × 17.5 cm (open)
 Institute of Oriental Studies,
 Russian Academy of Sciences,
 St. Petersburg
 XT-67

The beginning and end of this document are missing. The folios are sewn together as a single section: when it is opened, the text runs across the full width of the two half leaves. No other document in this form exists in either the Chinese or Tangut parts of the Khara Khoto collection; each half of a leaf normally contains an independent, complete text.

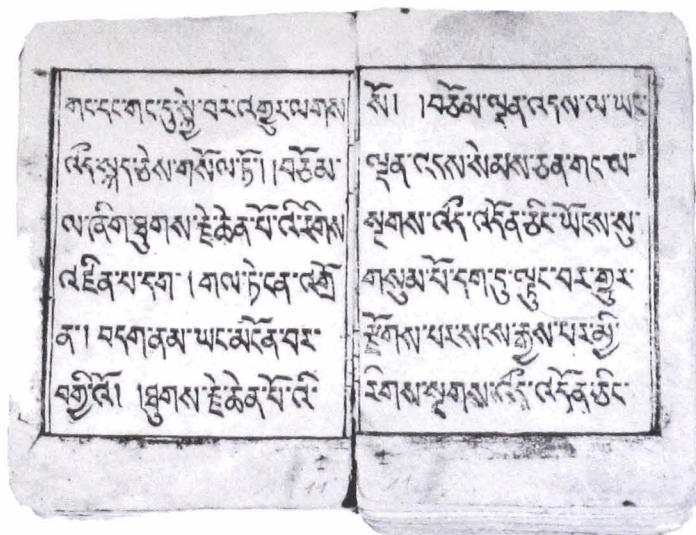
Pagination is marked by Chinese numbers in the fold of the leaves. This feature is common in Tangut xylographs, where pagination was either Tangut, Chinese, or a mixture of the two.

The text is contained within a single frame, measuring 15.8 × 9.4 cm.

The paper is white with a greyish tinge, and is of Tangut manufacture. The laid lines, seven to the centimetre, are barely discernible, and run at right angles to the length of the folio and the text. The thickness of the paper varies from 0.16 to 0.18 mm.

The pagination indicates that the following leaves have survived: (f. = folio, r = right-hand side only, l = left-hand side only, c = complete) f.2,r, f.3,c, f.4,c, f.5,c, f.6,l, f.9,r, f.10,c, f.11,c, f.12,c, f.13,l, f.23,c, f.24,c, f.25,r, f.26,c, f.27,l, f.34,r, f.35,l, f.37,r, f.38,l, f.49,r, f.50,c, f.51,c, f.52,c, f.53,c, f.54,l, f.56,r, f.57,c, f.58,c, f.59,l, f.60,r, f.61,l. This makes a total of 23 half-folios.

The fact that so many leaves are missing makes it difficult to determine how many texts the xylograph contained. For instance the missing leaves 14-22 might have contained some small complete work.



The surviving leaves suggest that the xylograph contained two Buddhist writings. The first finishes on f. 53, lines 2-4, where it states that the text above was a brief exposition of the contents of a *sūtra*, dedicated to the cult of the goddess Uṣṇīṣavijayā (gtsug-tor-rnam-par-rgyal-ma). In the Tibetan Buddhist canon (in the Tanjur, the section on Tantras – *rgyud*) there are several writings with precisely the same title: gtsug-tor-rnam-par-rgyal-ma'i-sgrub; Uṣṇīṣavijayāsādhana.¹ These small works (the largest occupies a single leaf) all describe the rituals by which one may, in the course of meditation, evoke within oneself, or into one's presence, the image of the goddess Uṣṇīṣavijayā. These texts are all so alike in content, that it is impossible to say for certain which of them is recounted in abbreviated form here.

What is particularly interesting is that the work in the xylograph is dedicated to a female, not male, Buddhist deity. This is no chance occurrence, but clearly connected

with the fact that the burial in the *suburgan* was of a woman of noble station, and a Buddhist believer.

The second work, which occupies ff. 56-61, cannot be identified, even speculatively, due to the fact that its beginning and its ending are missing, and that only single halves of leaves 56, 59, 60, 61 have survived. It may well also be a summary of the content of some Buddhist text. The small dimensions of the xylograph and its single-section format suggest that it was a sort of digest of two Buddhist texts, which the owner would have kept about his or her person, and used regularly. L.S.

¹The Tibetan Tripitaka, 1961, Nos. 4071, 4198, 4402, 4423, 4424.

Appendix

Glossary

In compiling this glossary, the following works have been consulted:

K.R. Ashim, *A Dictionary of Indology*, Oxford: Narain Nanikram Gidwani, 1983.

G. Tucci, *The Theory and Practice of Maṇḍala*, London: 1961.

D. Snellgrove, *The Hevajra Tantra*, London: 1959.

G. Liebert, *Iconographic Dictionary of the Indian Religions. Hinduism-Buddhism-Jainism*, Leiden: 1976.

abhaya mudrā. The 'fear-not' gesture of reassurance. The right hand is held with the palm facing to the front and the fingers raised.

Acala. One of the *dharmapālas* – Protectors of the Law.

ācārya. A teacher.

akṣara. A letter or syllable.

Akṣobhya. 'Imperturbable'. One of the five *dhyānibuddhas*, in whose *maṇḍala* he is placed either in the East, or in the Centre. Colour: white or blue. The head of the *vajra*-family.

Amitābha. 'Boundless Light'. One of the five *dhyānibuddhas*, in whose *maṇḍala* he is placed in the West. Colour: red. The cult of Amitābha enjoyed great popularity in China, Tibet and Xi Xia, the Tangut Empire.

Amoghasiddhi. One of the five *dhyānibuddhas*.

aṅjalimudrā. The gesture of salutation.

The hands are held near the chest, with the palms facing inwards and touching.

ankuśa. The hook-shaped goad of an elephant driver.

apsarā. A heavenly dancer, or musician.

In pre-Buddhist literature, a river god who lived in trees.

arhat. A wise man or saint. The highest rank in the Buddhist hierarchy after a Buddha.

āsana. Posture. See: *bhadrāsana*, *lalitāsana*, *mahārājajalāsana*, *padmāsana*, *prañāpāsana*, *pratyāñḍāsana*, *rājajalāsana*, *vajrāsana*, *virāsana*.

aśoka. A tree, associated in particular with Kurukullā or Māricī.

Āśokakāntā. A yellow two-armed form of Māricī, Goddess of the Dawn.

asura. A class of deity. Also the name used for a kind of demon.

Avalokiteśvara (Chinese: *Guanyin*). The *bodhisattva* of compassion, the most popular of Mahāyāna Buddhism, patron of Tibet. The Dalai

Lama is his personification.

He appears in many forms, and in China became a female deity later. Chapter 25 of the *Lotus Sūtra* is devoted to the compassionate deeds of Avalokiteśvara, the "lord who looks down on the human world with compassion."

ba bao. The eight auspicious objects placed upon an altar, originally symbols and attributes of *bodhisattvas*. They are: a wheel (*cakra*), a conch shell, a parasol, a flower, a jar, two fishes, a canopy and the 'endless knot' of happiness. In China they symbolised wealth and were: coral, a blazing jewel, a conch shell, a string of coins, silver ingots, a percussion instrument, scrolls and rhinoceros horn. The Chinese *ba bao* might also include a staff (*ruì*), elephant tusks etc.

bhadraghāṭa. A 'vase of fortune'. The Bhadraghāṭajātaka refers to a previous incarnation of the Buddha (when still a *bodhisattva*) as a rich merchant. Looking down from Heaven, he saw that his son had squandered all his wealth and was living in misery. He sent him the 'vase of fortune', but, in a drunken stupor, the son broke it.

bhadrāsana. The 'good' or benevolent posture, seated (on a throne), with feet on the ground.

Bhaiṣajyaguru. The Medicine Buddha, 'supreme divine healer or physician'.

Bhairava. A Hindu god, often depicted in Buddhist icons being trampled by a Buddhist god, e.g. Vajravārāhi.

bhūmisparśamudrā. The 'touching the earth' gesture. The deity, in *padmāsana*, touches the ground with the fingertips of the right hand.

Bodhi. Enlightenment; the full perception of transcendental wisdom.

bodhicitta. The 'will to enlightenment'.

Bodhisattva. One 'whose essence is perfect knowledge'. The cult of *bodhisattvas* was widely developed in the doctrine of Mahāyāna. A *bodhisattva* is a being who has achieved *Bodhi* – enlightenment, but has refused to become a Buddha, in order to devote himself entirely to the welfare and salvation of all living beings.

Brahmā. A Hindu god.

Buddha. The 'enlightened' or 'awakened' one. **buddhapāramudrā**. The Buddha's alms-bowl gesture. The hands are placed as though holding an alms-bowl. A *mudrā* which is generally closely associated with Śākyamuni.

caitya. A place sacred by virtue of its association with some event in the life of the Buddha, or a sanctuary.

cakra. A wheel, symbolising the 'Wheel of the Law' (*dharmacakra*). Commonly alludes to the Buddha's first sermon, when he 'set in motion' the Wheel of the Law.

cakravartin. A Universal (or World) Sovereign. A 'ruler, the wheels of whose chariot roll everywhere without obstruction'.

cāmara. A fly whisk.

campaka. A tree, sacred to Mahāsītavatī.

Candraprabha. A *bodhisattva*. Literally, 'moonlight'.

cāpa. A bow.

cintāmaṇi. A 'thought-gem', a jewel which grants all wishes.

ḍākinī. A female deity. The Tantric pantheon contains five higher order of *ḍākinīs*: Buddhaḍākinī, Vajraḍākinī, Ratnaḍākinī, Padmaḍākinī and Karmaḍākinī, in union with whom *dhyānibuddhas* symbolise the female and male principles.

The female principle is *prajñā* 'wisdom', the male – *upāya*, the 'means' by which wisdom may be attained.

Sexual union between the two symbolises the highest spiritual reality in the process of enlightenment.

In Tantric Buddhism a *ḍākinī* can also be a type of *yoginī*. The Tibetan translation of *ḍākinī* means a 'wanderer in the sky'.

ḍamaru. A small double-ended drum, shaped like an hour-glass.

daṇḍa. A staff or club.

dhāraṇī. An incantatory prayer or formula, often consisting of meaningless sounds.

dharmacakramudrā. The gesture of setting in motion the Wheel of the Law. The right hand is held before the chest with the tips of thumb and index finger joined and touching one of the fingers of the left hand.

dharmacakrapravartana. Setting in motion the Wheel of the Law. Alludes to the Buddha's first sermon at Benares.

dharmakāya. The abstract body in which a *dhyānibuddha* lives in *nirvāṇa*.

dharmapāla. A 'Guardian of the Law' deity. The *dharmapālas* are depicted as fierce deities, to instil terror in the forces of evil. Although

there are eight of them in all, only two are represented in the paintings from Khara Khoto: Mahākāla and Vaiśravaṇa. Some dieties from this group were adopted as patron-deities for certain schools of Buddhism.

Dhṛtarāṣṭra. A *dikpāla*, guardian of the East.

dhvaja. A banner or flag, a common attribute of Buddhist deities.

dhyānamudrā. The contemplative or meditative gesture. One or both hands lie in the lap, palm upwards.

dhyānibodhisattva. A 'meditation *bodhisattva*'.

Mahāyāna Buddhism recognises five: Samantabhadra, Vajrapāṇi, Ratnapāṇi, Padmapāṇi (= Avalokiteśvara) and Viśvapāṇi.

dhyānibuddha. A 'contemplation' Buddha, a term for a spiritual Buddha. There are five: Vairocana, Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha and Amoghasiddhi. They are now customarily referred to as the Five Tathāgatas (the Five Transcendent Buddhas, personifications of the Five Wisdoms). The five *dhyānibodhisattvas* are their emanation.

dikpāla. A deity who guards one of the quarters of the sky, or directions.

Dunhuang. A town now in Gansu Province, near to which stands the famous Buddhist temple complex of Mogao.

Ekajātā. A goddess who removes obstacles and grants happiness.

gadā. A mace or club.

Gaṇeśa. A Hindu god of wisdom, with a human body and an elephant's head. Often depicted in Buddhist icons being trampled by Viṣṇūnātha.

garuḍa. A mythical being, half-bird, half-man.

ghaṇṭā. A bell.

Guanyin. See: *Avalokiteśvara*.

haṃsa. A goose.

Hayagrīva. A *dharmapāla*, patron of horses, and an emanation of Amitābha or Akṣobhya.

hinayāna. See: *Three vehicles*.

Indra. A god in a variety of Indian religions.

Kākaśyā. A crow-faced protector of the East.

kalāśa. A water pot, or vase.

kanṅga. A Chinese instrument of punishment.

A heavy board, clamped round the miscreant's neck, making movement, eating, drinking etc. difficult or impossible.

kapāla. An alms-bowl, or skull-cup.

karttrī. A ritual knife.

kartṭikā. A ritual knife.

kesi. A technique used in making silk tapestry. See commentary on catalog number 19.

Khaṇḍarohā. A *ḍākinī*.

khaḍga. A sword.

khaṇḍvāṅga. A staff or club. A common attribute of Tantric deities. The tip bears three skulls, symbolising the conquest of the three evils: lust, hate and delusion.

kinnara. A semi-divine being associated with music.

kīrtimukha. 'Face of Glory'. It has the features of a lion.

Kṣitigarbha. (Chinese: *Ti-zang*) A *bodhisattva*, saviour of the oppressed.

Kubera (also Vaiśravaṇa). The *dikpāla* of the North.

kuṇḍikā. A beggar's bowl, or a water-jar.

Kurukullā. A popular Mahāyāna goddess, and emanation of Amitābha.

lalitāsana. The posture of (royal) ease.

One leg is tucked under the seated figure, the other hangs down.

lokapāla. 'World Sovereign'. A guardian of a direction.

Luipa. One of the *mahāsiddhas*.

Mahākāla. A Hindu god, manifestation of Śiva, and also a Buddhist god, an emanation of the five *dhyānibuddhas*.

mahāparinirvāṇa. The 'great, complete *nirvāṇa*'.

Mahāpratisarā. The chief of the five goddess-protectors of the *mahārāja-lokapālas*.

mahārājāḷāsana. A posture of (royal) ease.

The seated figure's legs are bent and placed upon the throne, the feet close together. One knee is raised, the other lies flat on the throne. One arm rests on the raised knee.

mahāsiddha. A 'great, perfect one' – one who, by practising meditative discipline, has attained *siddhi* (miraculous powers). Traditionally, there were eighty four *mahāsiddhas*.

Mahāsthāmaprāpta (Chinese: *Dashizhi*).

A *bodhisattva*, embodiment of wisdom.

Mahāyāna. See: *Three vehicles*.

Maitreya. 'The loving one' – a *bodhisattva* who inhabits the Tuṣita heaven, awaiting incarnation as a Buddha. He is revered in both Hinayāna and Mahāyāna Buddhism.

mālā. A rosary, or string of prayer beads.

maṇḍala. A 'magic circle', a symbolic geometrical diagram in which a deity is enclosed together with his or her entourage, and used in the ritual and meditational practices of Tantrism. The central circle is enclosed within a square denoting a sacred 'palace' with gateways at the four cardinal points. This may in turn be enclosed within another larger circle denoting a sacred area. The design of a temple may be a *maṇḍala*.

mandorla. A large halo surrounding the head and nimbus (body) of a deity, and representing the spiritual aura surrounding the figure as a whole.

mantra. An invocatory formula. See: *sādhana*.

Mañjuśrī. A widely revered *bodhisattva*, the Buddhist counterpart of the Hindu Brahmā, he is a god of wisdom, usually depicted with a sword – to cut through ignorance – and a book.

Māra. The Evil One, the Tempter, Death. Māra attempted to deflect the Buddha from the search for enlightenment.

Māricī. 'Ray of light' – the Goddess of the Dawn.

mudrā. A hand gesture, symbolising inner wisdom. See: *abbayamudrā*, *bhūmisparīyamudrā*, *buddhapātramudrā*, *dharmacakramudrā*, *dhyānamudrā*, *tarjanīmudrā*, *varadamudrā*, *vitarkamudrā*, *vyākhyānamudrā*.

nāga. A snake, or a snake deity.

nāgarāja. A snake deity.

nirvāṇa. The sublime state after death of those who have achieved perfect enlightenment.

Orders of Tibetan Buddhism.

(1) Bka'-gdams-pa (The Order of Those Bound by Precept) was founded by 'Brom-ston (1008-1064), a disciple of the Indian teacher Atīśa. It emphasised strict monastic discipline, the eradication of Tantric rituals, and the unification of the three schools of Buddhism.

(2) Sa-skya-pa took its name from the Sa-skya monastery, founded in 1073. In the thirteenth century, under the abbot 'Phags-pa, it became a powerful political force.

In 1260 the Sa-skya-pa was granted jurisdiction

by the Mongols over three provinces of Tibet, together with other privileges.

(3) **Bka'-brgyud-pa** (Transmitted Command) was founded by Marpa (1012-1098), who was initiated into Tantrism in India by the yogin Nāropa. Having become the third hierarch of the school, he in turn passed on the teaching to the great ascetic, yogin and poet, Mi-la ras-pa. Mi-la ras-pa's follower, sGam-po-pa (1079-1153) had several disciples, among them Dus-gsum-mkhyen-pa, who founded the influential sub-order of Bka'-brgyud-pa, the Karma-pa. Emissaries of the Karma-pa attended the Tangut court. Another important sub-order of the Bka'-brgyud-pa, the 'Bri-khung-pa (named after a monastery, founded in 1179), also had a considerable presence amongst the Tangut.

(4) The Rnying-ma-pa, (Old Order) claimed to have preserved in its purest form the teaching of the first Tibetan Buddhist tradition which dated from the late eighth century.

(5) the dGe-lugs-pa (the 'Virtuous') inherited the teaching of the bKa'-gdams-pa. It arose in the late fourteenth century and is known as the Yellow Hat order.

Padmapāṇi. 'Having a lotus in the hand'.

A *bodhisattva* usually regarded as a form of Avalokiteśvara.

padmāsana. The lotus posture. A cross-legged sitting posture, used in meditation.

paridhāna. A long undergarment.

pārijāta. A mythical tree, one of the five trees of paradise.

pāśa. A noose, or lasso, used to trap the enemies of the faith.

pātra. A monk's alms-bowl.

Piśha men. Chinese name for Kubera.

pothi. A book, consisting of long narrow leaves – based on the shape of a palm leaf – kept between boards and threaded together on cords.

pradakṣiṇa. A clockwise movement, imitating the apparent movement of the sun round the earth. Such movement around a sacred object or place is a sign of reverence.

prajñā (Chinese: *zhi*). Wisdom, the female principle, often personified. See: *yab-yum*.

prajñāpāramitā. 'The perfection of transcendent wisdom'. The Mahāyāna text prescribing the 'ten perfections' to which the would-be *bodhisattva* aspires.

The name is also given to a deity who personifies this scripture.

praṇāmaśana. The respectful posture.

pratyāliḍhāsana. The 'shooting' or 'fighting' posture. The left foot is advanced, the right foot drawn back.

Pravīra Tārā. The 'fierce' form of Tārā.

preta. A kind of ghost, or tormented spirit.

Usually depicted as emaciated and pot-bellied.

pu tou. A Chinese official's hat, somewhat like a kerchief with side-flaps.

rājatilāsana. See: *mahārājatilāsana*.

rākṣasa. A demon, or evil spirit.

Ratnapāṇi. See: *Dhyānibodhisattva*

Ratnasambhava. See: *Dhyānibuddha*

ruī. A staff.

Rūpiṇī. A *ḍākinī* and minor Mahāyāna goddess.

ṣaḍakṣarī. The magic formula of six syllables.
om maṇi padme hūṃ.

sādhana. An evocation. "The envisaging and calling forth of a divinity normally by means of repetitive recitation of the appropriate formula (*mantra*) and by meditation upon his formal representation."¹

Śākyamuni. Name of the historical Buddha.

samādhimudrā. Another name for *dhyānamudrā*, the meditation gesture.

Samantabhadra. See: *Dhyānibodhisattva*.

Saṃvara. A Mahāyāna deity, an emanation of Akṣobhya.

siddha. One of a class of saints who have achieved *siddhi* (miraculous powers).

Siṃhanāda Avalokiteśvara. A variety of Avalokiteśvara.

śiraścakra. A wheel-like halo.

Sitātapatrā. 'Having a white parasol' – a form of Avalokiteśvara.

śmaśāna. A sacred place of cremation or burial.

stūpa. A sepulchral monument, or tomb.

suburgan. The Mongolian word for *stūpa*.

Sūkarāsyā. A pig-faced protector of the South.

Sūryaprabha. 'Light of the sun'. A deity.

Śvānāsyā. A dog-faced protector of the West.

tangka. A painting in the form of a banner (Nepal and Tibet).

tantra. A Hindu or Buddhist ritual text, concerned with the evocation of deities by

a variety of means including *mantras*, *mūdras* and *maṇḍalas*.

Tao. In Chinese means 'path' or 'way'. Taoism is a philosophical-religious system based on the idea of the natural path followed by everything and every being.

Tārā. A female Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna goddess, the escort of a *dhyānibuddha*.

tarjanīmudrā. The threatening gesture.

The index finger is raised, the remaining fingers forming a fist.

Tathāgata. An epithet of a Buddha, who has attained the highest state of perfection.

Three vehicles. *Hinayāna* – 'lesser vehicle' or 'the minor road to salvation' – is the name given to an early form of Buddhism by adherents of the later form, *Mahāyāna* ('great vehicle'). *Hinayāna* was a monastic form of Buddhism, an individual path to salvation. *Mahāyāna*, which developed in the first centuries A.D., offered the possibility of salvation and buddhahood to all men. *Vajrayāna* ('diamond vehicle'), also known as Tantrism, is an esoteric form of Buddhism, whose aim is the achievement of salvation or Buddhahood within a single lifespan.

It attributes great significance to the spiritual mentor and to yogic practices.

triśūla. A trident. A common attribute, a symbolic weapon against evil or enemies.

Uḍḍiyāna. A form of Kurukullā.

Ulūkāsyā. An owl-faced protector of the North.

upāya. 'Means' – the male principle. See: *yab-yum*.

uṣṇīṣa. A protuberance on the head of the Buddha, symbolising superior consciousness and wisdom.

Uṣṇīṣavijayā. A Mahāyāna female deity, an emanation of Vairocana.

utpala. A lily, or blue lotus.

vāhana. A vehicle, or mount.

Usually the creature upon whom a particular deity rides.

Vairocana. See: *dhyānibuddha*.

Vaiśravaṇa. See: *Kubera*.

vajra. One of the most important symbols, and attributes, in Buddhism.

See catalogue number 66.

Vajraḍākinī. See: *ḍākinī*.

Vajradhara. A Buddha 'holding a *vajra*'.

Vajrapāṇi. See: *Dhyānibodhisattva*.

vajrāsana. The 'diamond' posture. The posture is the same as *padmāsana*, but is used mainly of the Buddha Śākyamuni, at the time he attained enlightenment.

Vajravārāhī. A Mahāyāna goddess, an emanation of Vairocana.

Vajrayāna. See: *Three vehicles*.

varadamudrā (or **varamudrā**). The wish-fulfilling gesture, indicating the charity of the Buddha. The hand hangs loose, usually with the fingers outstretched.

varamudrā. See: *varadamudrā*.

Varuḍa. A Hindu god, Lord of the Waters.

vidyādhara. A mythical being in Indian religions, having human form, and belonging to air/space.

Vighnāntaka. A Mahāyāna deity, an emanation of Akṣobhya. He is the 'remover of obstacles'.

vīṇā. A lute or zither.

vīrāsana. A variant of *vajrāsana*. Usually the left foot is resting on the right thigh, and the left thigh on the right foot.

Virūḍhaka. A *dikpāla*, guardian of the South.

Virūpākṣa. A *dikpāla*, guardian of the West.

Viśpāṇi. See: *Dhyānibodhisattva*

viśvavajra. A double *vajra* – two *vajras* crossed so that the ends point in the four directions.

vitarkamudrā (or **vyākhyānamudrā**). The gesture of appeasement or the 'analytical' gesture.

The right hand is raised, palm outwards.

The thumb touches the end of either the index or middle finger and the remaining fingers are held straight.

vyākhyānamudrā. See: *vitarkamudrā*

Xuan U. Lord of the northern quadrant.

See catalogue number 64.

yab-yum (Tibetan). *Yab* is the male principle (*upāya* q.v.), *yum* – the female (*prajñā* q.v.).

Union between them represents enlightenment, the achievement of the highest wisdom. The term is used to describe paintings in which the male deity is depicted embracing his consort (*prajñā*).

yakṣa. Originally *genii loci*, spirits of the mountains or forests, they later formed the retinue of Kubera.

Yamadadhī. A protector of the Southeast.

Yamadakṣṭrī. A protector of the Northwest.

Yamadūtī. A protector of the Southwest.

Yamamāthanī. A protector of the Northeast.

yidam. A protector deity, chosen by a believer to be his/her patron for life, or in some particular circumstances.

yoginī. A minor female deity.

Yue Bo. An imaginary planet, and its deity. See catalogue numbers 57 and 58.

zhi. See: *prajñā* (wisdom).

¹ Snellgrove, 1959, p. 137.

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